

# The Stewardship Of Faith



Kirsopp Lake



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The stewardship of faith













*By Kirsopp Lake*

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The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of  
Jesus Christ

The Stewardship of Faith

# THE STEWARDSHIP OF FAITH

OUR HERITAGE FROM EARLY  
CHRISTIANITY

BY

KIRSOPP LAKE

PROFESSOR OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IN  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

*LOWELL LECTURES IN 1913-14*

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## PREFACE

THE following pages are based on a series of lectures given at the Lowell Institute and in the King's Chapel in Boston in 1913. They have been rewritten and somewhat enlarged, but not seriously altered.

The title, *The Stewardship of Faith*, has been given because I feel that the most important fact which emerges from the study of Early Christianity as I have tried to present it, is that the Church owes its position to the endeavour of past generations to hold up to mankind a standard of life in religion, morality, and politics higher than that reached by the world in general. Christians were men who had seen a vision. Faith was their trust in the Guide who offered to lead them towards it, and of that Faith they were the Stewards. It was expressed in many different ways: in a series of theological and metaphysical propositions; in the splendour and pomp of sacramental liturgy; in the imposing structure of Christian ethics. But all these things were the expression, not the

essence, of the Faith which overcame the world; and the churches will fail in their stewardship if they confuse the expression with the reality, and forget that it is their office to protest against the world as it is, in the interests of the world as it might be.

The responsibility of those who teach Christianity at present is twofold. First, never to lose sight of the vision of a better world, and to teach their pupils to join with them in seeing visions and dreaming dreams; secondly, by the study of the past, and by keeping keen the edge of the intellect of themselves and of others, never yielding to the temptation to obscure the difficulties of fact by taking refuge in the ambiguities of language, to further the exact knowledge of the world as it is, in order that those who have the vision may also have the practical ability to use it in the service of progress.

I have tried to show the way in which the first Christians did this work, by translating their message from the terms of Jewish thought to those of the Greco-Roman world, and adding to it considerably in the process. And I have also tried to suggest that the churches of to-day ought to consider seriously the necessity for moving on in the same direction and giving to the world a



theology which will comply with the reasonable claims of the intelligence, an organization which will be capable of serving adequately the spiritual requirements of human souls, and an ethic which will satisfy both the individual and social needs of a New Age. For a New Age is coming speedily upon us, and whether it is to come in light or in darkness depends on the clearness of vision and singleness of purpose of the Stewards of Faith.

KIRSOPP LAKE.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *October*, 1914.



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# The Stewardship of Faith

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## CHAPTER I

### APOCALYPTIC JUDAISM

Introduction—Nationalism—Babylon—Rome—The Jews—The Catastrophic View of History—Apocalyptic Literature—Enoch—Its Intellectual Justification—Importance as a Spiritual Factor—Baruch—Jewish Hopes for Hastening the Coming of the Kingdom.

OF recent years we have been repeatedly warned that Christianity is at the cross roads. If closely analyzed, however, this warning does not throw doubt on the value of religion, or on the great part played by the Christian Church in the history of Western civilization; but it is a serious indictment of the Christianity of our own time as a satisfactory expression of religious life.

For Christianity is, and has long been, in some sense more than religion. It is religion, for it represents the feeling of intercourse between man

and some higher power, and also the struggle on the part of man to develop that side of his nature which, although his own, yet seems so strangely to be different from the rest of his consciousness, and to be a link between him and some world of higher realities. But it is also the attempt to express these two factors—always central in religion as such—in intellectual language, and so to give us not merely religion but also theology; for theology is the expression of religion in the language of the intellect. Moreover, not only is Christianity theology as well as religion, it is also the expression of religion in action, and has become a code of ethics—of conduct. It has gone even further, and has striven to give institutional expression to religion, theology, and ethics as mutually dependent on one another, in a series of communities which represent the coming together of those who feel that somewhere at the centre of their lives there is common experience expressed in more or less common intellectual phraseology, and manifesting itself in more or less common codes of conduct.

Thus Christianity is not only religion, it is also theological, ethical, and institutional life. The suggestion that Christianity is at the cross roads implies the indictment that there is a danger that

its theology is not taking sufficient note of the growth of knowledge and the changing attitude of thinking men to the problems of thought, so that it is becoming the repetition of shibboleths rather than the expression of experience. It implies that the moral code which is traditionally Christian needs expansion and revision because it has not taken sufficient note of the change of requirement due to the passing of the storm-centre of the modern world from individual to social problems. Finally it implies that there is a danger lest, partly from timidity, partly from the more honourable motives of reverence for the customs of our forefathers, we should sacrifice the cause for which the Christian Church was founded in order to perpetuate the accidents of its constitution.

With this indictment I do not propose to deal directly—in the main it seems to me to be true; but I desire to make the only contribution possible from a student of history to the attempt so to influence the minds of the Christians of to-day that they may choose the right road and enable our children to plead not guilty to an accusation which we ourselves are obliged to admit. I wish to go back to that distant period when the Church was young, in order that we may realize that then also

there was a time when Christianity was at the cross roads, and may see the way in which our spiritual forefathers passed successfully through the period of rapid change which took them out of the comparatively simple life of Judaism into the much more complex one of the Roman Empire. I wish to emphasize how in that generation the way of life was the constant sacrifice of identity of expression, in order to preserve the unity of experience under changed surroundings. The Church did not triumph because it preserved its theology, its ethics, or its institutions unchanged, but because it changed them all, and changed them rapidly, in order that they might express more adequately and more fully the spiritual life which remained the same, though the forms with which it was clothed were altering with extraordinary rapidity.

First of all, then, I propose to consider the nature of that aspect of Judaism which is the immediate background against which we have to place the figure of the historic Jesus. I shall then go on to set against that background the teaching of Jesus himself, as it seems to be revealed by the historical criticism of the gospels. After that it will be necessary to consider the characteristics of the world of the Roman Empire into which Chris-



tianity passed and to notice the changes in Christianity brought about by the different surroundings into which it then travelled. Thus I hope to sketch the way in which this process of readjustment produced the Catholic Church, and throughout to consider the legacy which has come down to us from Christianity as it passed through this period of rapid change, and the responsibility which is put upon us of so treating our inheritance that we may really develop it, not contenting ourselves with the fatal policy of burying our "talent" in the ground in order to avoid the risks of the market-place, and of the changes which seem so dangerous and are yet the necessary and sole conditions upon which continued life is granted to men or to man's institutions.

It does not, I hope, require any lengthy argument to justify the method of treatment thus adopted. It is obviously impossible to treat of a period in which events followed one another with such rapidity and of which the records are relatively so imperfect without the omission of many details of considerable though secondary importance. In order to be clear, it is necessary sometimes to be summary in the treatment of problems; but I have not been writing so much for special students of early Christianity as for that wider

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public which studies the past primarily as a mirror in which it may see the future approaching, and is more interested in the development and result of streams of tendency than in the exact cataloguing of successive incidents.

What was the dominating feature of the life of the Jews which it is necessary to comprehend for the proper appreciation of the impression which Jesus made upon his hearers? It can best be understood if we realize that one of the most important sides of the story of the Jews is a chapter in the history of nationalism. That is to say, it was a phase of the struggle which has gone on throughout the course of civilization between the great empires and the small nations. The Jew naturally looked at this struggle from the point of view of a small nation, but we can probably grasp it best if we first consider it from the point of view of the great empires.

If we go back some centuries before Christ, we find the Babylonian Empire as the centre of civilization. If we could have asked an ancient Babylonian how the empire was progressing (though he would of course have expressed it in quite a different manner from the modern phraseology here attributed to him) he would, I take it,

have said something like this: "Yes, the empire is flourishing. We have succeeded in extending our boundaries; we have succeeded in civilizing a large number of wild and savage tribes; we have brought them into the empire; we have made them useful members of civilization."

If we had then gone one step further, and asked him to tell us what was the policy of his empire, he would have said: "Well, whenever we find a small nation which is hindering our progress, we transplant it. We break it up and move it, a little here and a little there. We transplant it so that it is able more readily to assimilate itself to our civilization. The process is not always appreciated by the small nation at the time, but it makes for the good of the world in general."

That was the policy of Babylonia, and if we look at history we cannot but recognize that if a Babylonian statesman had spoken in this way he would have been justified. His empire was doing the work of the world. It was bringing about a certain progress of civilization, just as the great nations of the world are doing to-day; though we can also understand that the Jews, and other small nations which were transplanted, looked on the process as mere catastrophe, and as the tyranny of enemies whom God would ultimately destroy. It seems

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to me that it is particularly interesting to realize that, with one important difference, the United States come nearer to being the inheritor of the Babylonian method than any other nation in the world. They are carrying on what may be called the Babylonian experiment, with the exception that the transplantation is not being effected against the wills of the small nations, but at their own desire, and it is that which, if we look at the United States from the point of view of the world outside, constitutes the greatness of their work in the world—that they help to educate and to civilize the failures, or some of the failures, of the old world by forming them into a new and great empire. But, nevertheless, it is well to remember that by adopting the methods of Babylonia they become also the heirs of the difficulties which Babylonia had to face, and must beware of the dangers which led to the ultimate failure of that experiment in Babylonia, because it overtaxed its powers, and absorbed more foreign elements than it was able properly to assimilate.

If we now go on one step further in the history of the Jews, again from the point of view of the great nations, passing over the Greek period, we come to the Roman Empire. If we could have asked the Roman official in those days how the empire was

progressing, he—like the Babylonian—would have claimed success for his government. But if we had asked him what was the method of dealing with foreign nationalities adopted in the empire he would have said that the Romans did not feel able to carry out, and did not wish to carry out, the Babylonian experiment; that they were trying something else, and were proposing to preserve the nations as they were, but to weld them into a higher unity by putting before their eyes the higher concept of Empire as opposed to Nationality, making them look up to Rome not so much as one of the nations, but as the “common superior of nations.”

Once more, if we ask ourselves whether the Roman was right, we are bound to say that he was. He was really carrying on the work of civilization.<sup>1</sup> His claims were just; and, although his experiment failed in the end, it is surely interesting to remember that, just as the United States represent the Babylonian experiment, so the British Empire is the natural inheritor of the Roman experiment, because it is trying to do what the Roman did—to develop an organization in which it is possible

<sup>1</sup> It was noted by Roman historians that those who fought hardest against Rome were the fathers of the men who were most pleased to call themselves Romans.

for various nations to preserve their identity, and yet to feel that there is a higher unity of Empire above them.

Such was the attitude of the great nations which once dominated the world. Now let us turn round, and do a much more difficult thing,—consider the facts from the point of view of the small nation of the Jews. Instead of looking at history as the triumphal procession of civilization, they necessarily regarded it much more as the warding off—and the not always complete warding off—of a series of catastrophes. Everything seemed to be constantly going wrong. Actual disaster might be averted, but by no possible means could they regard the existing state of things as satisfactory. They had thought they were the chosen people; they had expected that dominion and power should be given to them; and they were, at the best, merely fighting for a precarious existence, constantly threatened with extinction by the struggles of great nations.

Under the pressure of that constant adversity, a very peculiar type of thought was developed, and it is this which is especially important as being the ultimate background of the thought of the first generation of Christians. It was intensely monotheistic; it believed in the existence of the one

God of the Jews, and of him alone. It was intensely moral; it had a high—an extraordinarily high—code of ethics. And the Jews used both their monotheistic creed and their high ethical standards as a fence to protect themselves against the aggression of foreign nations. Finally they developed, within the circle of monotheistic ethics, a special catastrophic view of the universe. That is to say, under the influence of their national disasters, they came to regard the whole course of history as a succession of great dramatic catastrophes, and looked forward with hope to the coming of one great, final cataclysm, after which the tyranny of the great nations would be trodden underfoot, and the children of Israel would take their place as the chosen people of God, under his direct governance, with his anointed king as his representative on earth.

That catastrophic view of the universe (which the theologian has learned to call eschatological, because it deals with the *ἔσχατα*, or “the last things”) was the source of a whole literature, which was produced more or less after the close of the canon of the Old Testament, and before, or at the same time as, the rise of Christianity. It is a literature which even among theologians is not yet sufficiently well known, though the amount

which we know now is enormous as compared with what was known even fifty years ago, thanks to the discoveries of documents in Egypt and other places, and to the more scientific editions of previously known sources.

In this literature there was a constant attempt to explain history by starting from the beginning of creation and stating it, not in the terms of actual events, but in the terms of the supposed interventions of various supernatural beings, some of which were derived from Babylonian mythology, so that we can trace under the guise of the narrative of these supernatural interventions a series of allusions to the great events in the history of Israel. At the end, however, there is usually given an imaginative sketch of one more great intervention, this time entirely in favour of Israel, which is to close the history of the world as it is now, and inaugurate a new age and a new society, in which there is to be neither enemy of Israel, nor wicked men, nor sorrow, nor any that oppresses, nor any that suffers wrong. That is the picture of the future which they painted. An example may be taken from the book of Enoch,<sup>1</sup> in which the writer describes how he saw a vision of the great day which was to inaugurate this last intervention:

<sup>1</sup> Enoch xlvi.iii., 1.



And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness, which was inexhaustible, and around it were many fountains of wisdom, and all the thirsty drank of them and were filled with wisdom, and their dwellings were with the righteous and holy and elect. And at that time the Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and his name before the Head of Days. . . . He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall, and he shall be the light of the Gentiles and the hope of those who are troubled at heart. . . . And in those days shall the countenance of the kings of the earth be downcast and the strong who possess the land, because of the works of their hands. For in the day of their anguish and affliction they shall not be able to save themselves, and I will give them over into the hands of mine elect. As straw in the fire shall they burn before the face of the holy; as lead in the water shall they sink before the face of the righteous, and no trace of them shall any more be found. . . . In those days a change shall take place for the holy and the elect, and the light of days shall abide with them, and in those days shall the earth also give back that which was entrusted to it, and shall also give back that which it has received, and Hell shall give back that which it owes. In those days the Elect One shall arise, and he shall choose the righteous and holy from among them; and he shall sit on my throne, and his mouth shall pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel, for the Lord of Spirits hath given them to him, and hath glorified him, and the earth shall rejoice and the righteous shall dwell upon it, and the elect shall walk thereon.

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We recognize at once that this is the story of the hope of the coming of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and of the coming of the Anointed One, the Messiah, to be the king of the elect in that kingdom. And it is of primary importance that when we talk about the kingdom of God in early Christianity and the idea of the Messiah—which translated into Greek is “the Christ” or into English is “the Anointed One”—we should set them against the background of this contemporary eschatological thought which was the direct outcome of the struggle of Israel against the great nations of the world, if we wish to know what they meant to the men of that generation.

It is very easy for us to be scornful about this view of the universe, and the eschatological expectation of the Jew. It is obvious that it was exclusive, that it was frequently narrow, and, above all, that it was in the end an illusion, because it has not come true. That is very easy to see. What is less easy, but what is much more important, is to appreciate the great spiritual and even intellectual value which it possessed.

If you look at it first from the intellectual point of view, of course it is true that the eschatological hope was an illusion; it was not going to happen. But can we be quite sure that illusions are not very

often the source of progress? Let me take an example. What was the intention of Columbus when he discovered America? It was to find a way to India,<sup>1</sup> and if he had not been under a complete illusion as to the geography of the world he would not have troubled to find what was then a wild and savage country.

Similarly throughout history the great men who have done great things have, as a rule, been influenced by illusion. That is to say, when they have tried to foresee the future, they have foreseen it wrong. Probably no one does anything else if he tries to foresee the future on any large scale. But the man who helps the world is not he who is content to say: "I cannot foresee the future; therefore I will keep my eyes fixed rigidly upon the present," but he who allows himself to dream dreams and to see visions, although he knows that they are, from the necessity of the case, of the nature of illusions, because his intuition gives him the higher wisdom which teaches that it is just that sort of illusion, that sort of vision, which has always been the driving power in the history of civilization. Men find out quickly enough that

<sup>1</sup> Not only was this his intention, but he seems to have died in the belief that he really had done so. Columbus never knew what he gave to the world.

the dream is but a dream, and that the vision is an illusion; they soon go back to things as they are. But they remember the vision which they have seen, and it becomes the incentive which helps them to make the world approach, if it be but by a little, somewhat more closely to the vision of that better world which they have seen.

For this reason then it was a good thing for the world as a whole that there should be a little nation which was under an illusion as to the course of history, but which was, nevertheless, able to bequeath to succeeding generations a vision of life as it never has been and never will be on this earth, in order that that vision should become the ideal which has animated, stimulated, and guided centuries of Christian endeavour.

Or again, still remaining at the intellectual point of view, of course the eschatological expectation is wrong, as a prognostication of the future; it supplies, however, the antidote to some of the things which we exaggerate in our generation. We are constantly told that history is the history of human progress, and in the end that is no doubt true, but nevertheless I venture to believe that many of us carry that sort of thing to quite a ridiculous point, always picturing history as a steady process, and forgetting that, if we look at

history from a national point of view, the Jew was perfectly right when he said it was a catastrophic process, even though he was wrong in the way in which he pictured the supernatural manipulation of these catastrophes. Our generation would do well to remember that the lesson of history is not that nations constantly go on in a steady line of progress; it is rather that there are sudden periods of florescence, when enormous progress is very rapidly made; and then a period in which life stays on a level. Then, again, when men become greedy and lazy, there comes a sudden fall—a catastrophe—when the rubbish and rank luxuriance of civilization is torn up and destroyed, in order to leave the ground clear for a new harvest. That was a truth that the Jew knew perfectly well, and I am not sure that we always do.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not only on the intellectual side that this catastrophic view of history, the eschatological expectation, was justified, not by its accuracy, but by its influence on the minds of those who held it. If we turn to the side of spiritual life we find that this expectation of catastrophe was one of the things which so often took the Jew out of the littlenesses of life, and made him feel that, after

<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1913. Few of us thought then how near the catastrophe might be.

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all, the important things in the world are not merely those of relation, but that there are certain absolute values which we have with us now, and shall take with us, even if we go hence—so long as we are “we” at all.

It was in that way that the Jews became the greatest contributors in history to the feeling that, besides the duty which a man has to the society to which he belongs, there is also a duty which he owes, as it were, to his own soul, calling on him so to live that he is not entirely dependent at the last upon his relationship to any particular group of men, or to any special institution; so that his soul has a real life of its own, apart from its relationship.

This is illustrated again and again in the apocalyptic literature of the Jews, often coming as a refreshing subject, when we are beginning to get tired of the constant cycle of supernatural mythological imagery. Baruch, for instance, warns his hearers of the necessities laid upon them by this view of life<sup>1</sup>:

Before therefore judgment exact its own,  
And truth demand that which is due,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Baruch lxxxv. (I have slightly altered the wording of the last paragraph, so as to avoid a certain roughness of expression, but the meaning has not been changed.)

Let us prepare our soul,  
That we may have hope, and be not put to shame,  
That we may rest with our Fathers, and be not  
    punished with our foes.  
For the youth of the world is past, and the strength  
    of creation is exhausted,  
And the coming of the time is at hand,  
And the ship is nigh unto the harbour, and the pilgrim  
    reaches the city,  
And life is close unto its end.  
So then prepare your souls, that,  
When you rise up, and leave the ship of your pilgrim-  
    age,  
You may rest, and pass not into condemnation.

Is the feeling not justifiable that the view of life which could make a man write this is not a thing which we can throw on one side and say that it is merely apocalyptic illusion? As an expectation of the future it was mistaken, but as an insight into the reality of life it was true.

Let me now pass on to one more important detail in the Jewish thought, connected with their eschatological hope. Supposing we believed, as the Jews did in those days, that the last great supernatural intervention was at hand, that the kingdom of God was coming, what question should we ask? Probably we should say: "What can we do to hasten the coming of that kingdom?" That is exactly what the Jews in their generation did ask.

They considered again and again what was the right policy for them to adopt in order to bring about this last intervention which they so much desired.

The first, perhaps the most influential and important, answer was that of the Scribes, the students of the law. They said: "Keep the law. Observe it down to the last letter. Live with meticulous accuracy according to its every precept. If ever the day come when the whole of the law is observed, then the kingdom will come. It is the sins of Israel—its transgressions of the law—which are delaying the coming of the kingdom. Therefore, keep the law. That is what is necessary!"

But there was another party among the Jews who said: "Not so. We know that before the kingdom can come there will be a great war; there will be rebellions; there will be disasters. The horrors of that last time will eclipse everything which we have yet suffered. We have it in our own hands. If we provoke war, and all its horrors, by action, or rebellion against the enemies of Israel, then we shall bring about the condition of things which will mark the last days, and as a reward for our faith, God will intervene at the last moment, when all seems lost, and will miraculously destroy



our enemies. Therefore fight against the evil ones; resist the enemy; rebel; destroy.”

That was the policy of the party called the Zealots.<sup>1</sup> You will understand that they were looked upon with especial disfavour by the Roman authorities. But for us their significance is that they are a very important part of the background against which we have to set the teaching of the gospels, and that they are often overlooked. Pharisees we know, and Sadducees we know—or think we do—but Zealots we neglect, because they are not often mentioned by name in the gospels. Yet that is not really strange when we realize that from their attitude to the Romans they necessarily could play no part in the final tragedy in Jerusalem. Nevertheless they were certainly a power in Judaism, and in the next chapter the suggestion will be made that there is not a little anti-Zealotic polemic in the gospels.

<sup>1</sup> An especially interesting account is given by H. Windisch in *Der messianische Krieg*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND THE BACKGROUND OF APOCALYPTIC JUDAISM

The Sources—The Fourth Gospel—The Synoptic Question—The Gospel of the Kingdom—Repentance—Scribes, Publicans, and Sinners—The Sabbath—Zealots—World-renunciation—Hostility of the Priests—Jesus' Expectation of Death—Jesus' own View of Himself—"Messias Geheimniss"—The Son of Man—Criticism and Faith.

**I**N the last chapter an attempt was made to describe the most important features of the background of Jewish thought, against which the figure of the historic Jesus must be placed.

It is, however, first of all necessary to ask what are the sources from which this figure can be reconstructed, because it is here that the real difference can be found between the standpoint of the present time and of fifty years ago.

If any one had been trying in those days to study the choice of sources to be consulted for the reconstruction of the life of Jesus, he would have certainly taken the four gospels, and have treated them as a more or less co-ordinated whole. That

is to say, he would have assumed all four of them to have the same, or almost the same, value as historic evidence; and would have placed them in his mind, as it were, side by side.

Since then we have passed through a double revolution of thought, generally known by the title—I was almost going to say by the opprobrious title—of higher criticism.

It is called “higher criticism,” not from any attempt to claim for it any superior rank or value, but simply in allusion to a metaphor which compared this sort of criticism to the attempt of the explorer who is working his way up some great river, and is trying to go higher up towards the sources. This is all that the word means: but it has suffered from the insinuations of obscurantists who have found the application of adjectives an easier form of controversy than the refutation of arguments.

The result of this kind of study has been that in the first place, students of early Christianity have seen for some time that they cannot place the four gospels side by side in the old manner. There has been a long critical argument, resulting in the recognition that the fourth gospel, the gospel of St. John, clearly belongs to a later period, and that the writer does not give the facts as they

happened, but reinterpreted, rewritten, and reconsidered in the light of one or two generations of thought and experience, so that it is for the historian of less value than the first three gospels.<sup>1</sup>

The discovery of this was the first revolution. The second came, almost within my own memory, at all events in England, when students began to realize that we could not even put the first three gospels side by side; to see that even here we have not the ultimate sources from which we can reconstruct the life of Jesus, and that it is possible to go behind the text, and reconstruct some at least of the traditions upon which it is based.

To come to the result without giving the very long history of the investigation, the end was that critics in almost every country came to two conclusions:

(1) Behind the first three gospels is a document which is almost, if not entirely, identical with our gospel of Mark, so that in the passages in which we have the same story in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Mark must in the main be taken

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, for the historian of the life of Jesus. But for the history of Christianity the situation is reversed. The Catholic Church is not merely founded on the facts as they happened, but even more on the interpretation of the facts—in other words, on the gospel of St. John, rather than on the synoptics.

as the original, and the other two gospels as the earliest commentaries on Mark.

(2) Behind Matthew and Luke, in passages where they do not cover the same ground as Mark, there is also a common source which is very early.

This source is generally known as Q, because the German scholars who first drew attention to it called it Q(uelle=source), in order not to beg the question by giving it some more definite name.<sup>1</sup>

No serious critics suggest that Q and Mark represent the whole truth, but they do say very emphatically that the historian must begin with these two documents, Mark and Q, and treat them as the earliest and best authorities for any attempt to reconstruct the life of Jesus.

According then to these narratives we find that Jesus is represented first of all as having been

<sup>1</sup> It should however be noted that there is often a tendency to treat Q as if we knew all about it. As a matter of fact we only know that certain sections of Matthew and Luke are mutually dependent on a common original: it is convenient to call this Q, but we do not know whether this Q is always the same document, or whether many or few sections in Matthew or Luke, with no parallels, do not come really from Q. Moreover the reconstructions of Q are—except in a few points where editorial touches are obvious—either works of the imagination or, still worse, un-intelligent compilations which try to conceal their mechanical nature by a claim to being objective.

baptized by John the Baptist. At that moment he experienced the vision of the heavens being opened, and heard a voice from heaven saying that God recognized him as his son. Then, after a period in the wilderness, he began preaching in the synagogues in Galilee, and here we come to the first serious question: What did he preach? We may be quite sure that any writer will put into the foreground the message which he regards as central, and it is therefore very important to notice that at the very beginning Mark tells us that the message was: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent!"

If we remember the background of Judaism, that can only have meant to his audience that the last great catastrophe was at hand, when the Messiah would come and intervene on behalf of the Elect—therefore, repent! It implies the same background of thought as Enoch, and the same message as Baruch's: "Therefore, prepare your souls!"

Continuing the narrative we find that, shortly after this, there was a quarrel between Jesus and the rulers of the synagogue, and he went out to preach on the hillside by the shore of the sea. From that moment Jesus was outside the synagogue. He was now beginning his own organiza-

tion, and we may really say that this is the moment when the Church began to exist.<sup>1</sup>

We then find a long period—at least long if we reckon by months,—the period of preaching in Galilee, and the growing conviction that, though the kingdom is at hand, more and more stress must be put upon the old belief that the last days before the coming of the kingdom will be terrible, and full of suffering. Finally there is a visit to Jerusalem, with the same message illustrated, according to Mark, by a long discourse emphasizing the horrors which are to come at the last day, and then the betrayal and crucifixion. There we reach the end of the ministry of the historic Jesus of Nazareth on earth. With the story of the resurrection which follows there comes a new chapter, a chapter which deals with the history of the community which remained.

It has been possible to pass very quickly over this account of the life of Jesus, because its details are so generally familiar. But it is very desirable to reiterate how much there is in the oldest strata of the gospel which really bears out the contention that the preaching of Jesus at this period, with regard to the coming of the kingdom, was homogeneous with the type of Jewish teaching in the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *Transmission of the Gospel Narrative*.

last chapter. We are too apt to explain things away. We do not give their full significance to passages such as that in which Jesus says: "There are those who stand here who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God come in power." Or again: "This generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled." The world of ideas to which these passages belong is the same as that of Enoch. Or again, emphasizing that, although this was true, yet no man knew the exact moment of the coming, "concerning that day or hour knoweth no man save the Father; watch, for ye know not when the time is." We are reminded at once of Baruch's: "Prepare ye your souls! The time is at hand." It is the same spirit, and without realizing that this sort of teaching was not something new, but brought with it a whole series of associated ideas well known to the Jews, it is impossible to understand what sort of impression the preaching of Jesus must have made upon his contemporaries.

The condition which Jesus laid down for entrance into the kingdom was in principle not unacceptable to the Scribes. He demanded repentance, and to a Jew this could only mean one thing: "Turn round and change your mode of life; alter your evil ways; walk in the path of righteousness;



lest when the day comes, and the kingdom is here, you may be left outside."

That is teaching which any Scribe would in principle have accepted: but its development made manifest certain important differences. The call to repentance is expanded in various places in Mark and, at much greater length, in the document which we call Q, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. If we try to place the general result of these expansions against the background of contemporary thought, we find that it partially accepted a great part of the teaching of the Scribes, who took the view that if men observed the law they would be able to enter the kingdom, but it went beyond it. It said: "Observe the law"—as the Scribes did—but it added to the law by making it something which dealt not merely with the code of outward conduct, but also with the intention of the heart; supplementing, rather than rejecting, the teaching of the Scribes it said: "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The full message of Jesus is given in epitome in the primitive account in Mark: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the good news." Its centre, so far as controversy was

## 30      The Stewardship of Faith

concerned, was "repent," but, by a curious misunderstanding, Christians have often read into "believe the good news" all the implications of the later Pauline or even Lutheran theology, and by translating the Greek by "gospel" instead of by "good news" have entirely changed its meaning. The original signification of "good news" here was the announcement which had just been made—the coming of the kingdom. The "faith" which Jesus asked for was faith in the truth of his message. It is not faith in him as Messiah which is required; that was the "good news" which the Christian missionaries preached, and therefore faith to them often came to be almost, if not quite, identical with believing the proposition that the Christ is Jesus, and, as the Jewish connotation of this phrase was lost sight of, this developed into the equivalent of a judgment made on past events. But that is not the meaning of faith in the synoptic narrative<sup>1</sup>: it is always an attitude of expectancy as to the future, not of credence in a certain view of the past. It sometimes refers to the healing of a sick person,<sup>2</sup> sometimes to the forgiveness of sins,

<sup>1</sup> It has however changed its meaning in the fourth gospel, in which it certainly means a definite opinion as to Jesus. Here again the fourth gospel is valuable for the history of Christian thought rather than for the faith and the life of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Psychologically this is important. Faith healing depends on

but here, at the beginning of the gospel, it has its normal meaning—the belief in the truth of the announcement that in the immediate future the kingdom of God would come.

The announcement that the kingdom was at hand, and the appeal for belief in its truth, was thus a message which was unlikely to provoke active opposition. It was, indeed, to every Jew “good news” and even though many might be sceptical, none would be necessarily hostile to an assurance that an event was approaching for which the prayers of the pious were daily offered.

The hostility recorded in the gospels arose in connexion with the class of persons to whom Jesus made the offer of entry into the kingdom, and the practical interpretation which he gave to repentance as the necessary condition for this entry. On these points the teaching of Jesus differed sharply from that of the Scribes and the Zealots, and in the oldest strata of the gospels we can clearly trace the existence of controversy with both.

So far as the Scribes were concerned the teaching

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the firm conviction on the part of the patient that he is going to be cured: any other belief is only valuable so far as it produces this result. It may be reasonable or it may be ridiculous, but, however ridiculous, it is nevertheless valuable if it helps to bring a conviction of convalescence—that is, of future health—to the sick person.

of Jesus as to the class of persons who could be admitted to the kingdom was wholly unacceptable. In their eyes this was the especial privilege of the righteous and pious in Israel; but Jesus announced that he had come to call sinners. In the later forms of the text this is softened by changing the phrase to "call sinners to repentance." In one sense, no doubt, this change is justified: Jesus did not tell sinners to continue sinning, and nevertheless offer them entry into the kingdom. But it obscures the full importance of the message. The Scribes did not seriously consider the possibility that a "Publican"<sup>1</sup> or a "Sinner"—that is to say, any one who did not observe all the obligations of the Scribes' interpretation of the Law—would be admitted to the kingdom, nor did they take any special pains to convert these despised elements among the people. Jesus, on the other hand, regarded himself as having a special mission to these classes, and offered to those who would

<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely necessary to say that the publicans were tax-collectors, or perhaps more exactly custom-house officers; but I prefer to keep the old translation, because the whole point is that the "publicans" of the Roman administration were a hated and despised class; this connotation, which is essential, is not preserved by the translation "tax-collector," because, however much taxes or customs may be disliked, no one—except momentarily—passes his dislike of them on to the tax-collector, or custom-house officer.

follow him in his mission of preaching and preparation the certainty of entry into the kingdom. It should be noted that this fact is sometimes exaggerated: Jesus did not say that only those who followed him would be admitted, and he did not deny the existence of "righteous" in Israel, to whom he was not sent, who needed no physician.<sup>1</sup> The claim to have the exclusive right of entry to the kingdom of heaven—the essence of ecclesiasticism in the bad sense of the word—was perhaps made by the Scribes, or at least by some of them, but not by Jesus, though Christians have in this respect not always followed his example.

On the one hand, then, the teaching of Jesus was in agreement with, and even went beyond, that of the Scribes. Therefore just as later on in the Rabbinical writings many passages were animated by what we have come—not quite fairly—to regard<sup>2</sup> as a specifically Christian spirit, there were, in the time of Jesus, undoubtedly many among

<sup>1</sup> I cannot see that we have the least reason to suppose that Jesus was ironical when he spoke in this way.

<sup>2</sup> It is not necessary to be a great Talmudist to realize that Christian theologians have for centuries been unfair to Rabbinical Judaism. I may perhaps be allowed to commend to the serious attention of those who desire to hear the Jewish side stated with fairness and learning, and by no means unsympathetically to Christianity, Mr. C. Montefiore's *Judaism and St. Paul*, and his *The Synoptic Gospels*.

the Jews who heard him gladly and accepted his teaching. But, on the other hand, this agreement was eclipsed by the fact that his teaching was obnoxious and roused hostility because it opened the door of hope to a despised and hated class.

Moreover, serious friction arose, because whereas the teaching of Jesus went beyond that of the Pharisees in the intensive value attached to the law, as claiming the obedience of desires and wishes as well as of actions, he refused to go as far in the extent of the control which it demanded over conduct. Jesus put on one side the Sabbath law and the ceremonial law. He regarded with abhorrence the meticulous care which the Scribes devoted to indifferent actions. It was on this point that collisions most often arose, and heated controversy ensued. The synoptic narratives are full of this controversy, largely because it was continued in a modified form by the apostles, and therefore appealed to the present as well as to the historic interest of the writers of the gospels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is again worth noting how far the writer of the fourth gospel departs from the facts, and rewrites them in the light of the controversy of his own time. The discussion with the Jews remains; but it is scarcely at all concerned with the observance of the law. The question discussed is the nature and functions of Jesus, which had, of course, become the burning point of dispute between Christians and Jews a generation after his death, but was scarcely discussed at all during his life. In this instance, too, the

The polemic against the Pharisees and Scribes in the gospels has always been recognized: but that against the Zealots is quite as important, and has unfortunately been often overlooked.<sup>1</sup> Much of the teaching of Jesus becomes intelligible only when we place it in contrast to that of the Zealots. He demanded that men should believe that the kingdom would come, not because of their fighting, but because of their suffering. "In your suffering—your patient endurance—shall you win your lives"; "he that suffers to the end shall be saved"; "resist not evil" and similar passages seem to be clearly directed against the exactly opposite Zealot teaching.

The positive side of this teaching is carried still further. It calls upon men to give up all their possessions, to abandon their wealth, to cut themselves loose from the ties of family; it excludes the rich from the kingdom—at least, that seems to be the plain meaning—and it calls on men to follow one who has not where to lay his head. It is the

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synoptic narrative justifies its historical nature. Second-century Christianity would never have invented a story concerned only with a controversy which, even if it still existed, was no longer the main issue.

<sup>1</sup> Honourable exception must be made of H. Windisch: *Der messianische Krieg und das Urchristentum*, and K. F. Proost: *De Bergrede, hare herkomst en strekking* (*The Sermon on the Mount, its Origin and Tendencies*).

extremest negation of all possible kinds of what we call social values. It is a call to men to set themselves free of everything that ties them down and binds them to society as it is. I submit that it is only intelligible if you understand that it comes from a circle which believed that society in its existing form was doomed, and that those would have the best chance—the only chance, indeed—of entering into the coming age, the new society, the kingdom of God, who were not tied down and smothered by that which was so soon to perish.

After all, if we were quite certain that this world was going to cease to exist in a few months, we should not take any interest in social conditions or politics, or even in the smaller problems of private life; nor would it be rational for us to do so. The reason why it is rational for us to do these things, and is wrong for us not to take a lively interest in them, is because we are as firmly assured that society *is* going to continue as the disciples of Jesus were convinced that it was coming to an end.

But if this view of the gospels be correct do we not reduce the whole teaching of Jesus to something which is negligible, because it was based on a complete misconception of what was going to happen? On the contrary, for that very reason



it was able to put certain values of the greatest possible importance into clear light, and it could have done so in no other way. It cut out the social values. That is true, but an illustration will serve to show the gain of this omission. Those who have ever studied photography know that usually they are dealing with plates which are too sensitive to blue and insufficiently sensitive to yellow light, so that difficulties arise if they want to photograph something which contains a great deal of yellow. They therefore use a screen of yellow glass, which cuts out the other rays of light, so that they obtain artificially a world in which there is little except yellow light, and thus overcome the limitations of their plates. From the point of view of this illustration our minds are photographic plates which are too sensitive to certain social values, and not sensitive enough to certain spiritual values; and I believe that the eschatological point of view of the Jews and of Jesus has served as the yellow screen which has enabled us to overcome this lack of proportion.

Broadly speaking, it may be said that there are two aspects of ethical teaching. The first is that with which in modern times we are so familiar, the teaching which says that the first thing a man has to do is to be a good citizen. This is the world-

affirming ethic which says that this world as we have it is God's world. That is a perfectly true statement: We are put here to work, and if we scorn society, and do not do our fair share, we are shirking the responsibility which has been put upon our shoulders. Therefore it is our duty to take part in all such things as social, political, and national duties (which may not appeal to us very much in themselves), because they are the things which we are put here to do.

But there is also another kind of ethical teaching—the teaching which denies the world; which says that these social and national claims are doubtless valid, but there is something beyond them all, and a man is more than a good citizen. There are times when he has the right and the duty not to be hurrying about, and busily doing something, but rather to go aside and think about the meaning of life. There come times when he will not even be able to do his work in the world properly, if he do not throw aside the world altogether for a moment, and stand apart from the hurry and toil of life as it is now, to ask himself what he will do in the end thereof. This is the world-renouncing<sup>1</sup> ethic which says that, although

<sup>1</sup> It is not quite clear to me whether “world-renouncing” is really the best possible expression for what is intended. In some ways

many possessions and wide interests enable a man not only to enjoy life, but also to do much good to other people, if he be not able at times to throw off all their claims he becomes the slave of his own surroundings.

Stated in terms of modern life, it reminds us that although it be true that society, so far as we can see, is permanent, and that the world is not speedily coming to an end by means of some dramatic cataclysm, it is nevertheless true that we personally are coming to an end, so far as the world or society is concerned, within a period which, after all, cannot be so very long. And, stated in the terms of ancient Jewish life, it is this ethic which is presented most vividly and most strongly in just those parts of the New Testament which represent the teaching of Jesus when he and his hearers were looking at life under the influence of the eschatological expectation.

The effect of that expectation was to hide almost entirely the more obvious duties of a "world-

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"self-renouncing" would be better; but this also is not wholly satisfactory, and therefore, though with some hesitation, I have conformed to the usual phraseology. What however is important is to distinguish clearly between the world-renunciation or self-renunciation of Jesus, which does not imply any dualistic theory that the "world" or the "self" is inherently evil, and the Gnostic doctrine which demanded world-renunciation because it condemned the world as incurably evil.

affirming ethic" in daily life, but in the darkness thus induced some of the eternal lights shone out, as the stars during an eclipse. It is the fashion to call an ethic conditioned by the eschatological expectation an "interim ethic," but though there is of course a sense in which the phrase is correct, it is well to remember that the "interim" element is not inherent in the ethic, but rather in the circumstances to which it is applied. In a very real sense no ethic is so truly "interim" as that which affirms a world to which our relationship is but the transitory and fleeting measure of earthly existence; and none deserves the name so little as that which emphasizes man's ephemeral nature, even though it form an inaccurate image of the method of his passing away.

Of course there are other views as to the interpretation of the gospels. For instance there are critics who maintain that all the eschatological teaching is a later addition to the gospel. They cut it out by the somewhat free use of the critical knife. But I do not think that they are successful in explaining its origin. If it be not genuine, who invented it? Can they seriously ascribe it to a later generation, living when the expectation of the coming of the kingdom had been shown by

the event to be illusory? Moreover they nearly always explain away the world-renouncing teaching.

But by this sort of interpretation they are surely not giving us what the historic Jesus really said in all its strength and vividness. They are giving us a mixture of what he said toned down by what they feel to be the claims of the world-accepting ethics which are necessary for modern society. And the tragedy, to my mind, is that they give us something which is neither very good world-accepting ethic nor very good world-renouncing ethic. They bring it all down to a commonplace level, and, by cutting out the eschatological element from the gospels, they not only make Jesus into some one who does not really belong to the first century, but also, to my mind, does not, with their reconstruction, really belong quite adequately to any century. Their Jesus is not historical, and the just nemesis is that they do not seem able to give an adequate answer to the rising school of students of literature in Germany which has more or less taken their reconstruction of the historic Jesus, and has said that it is not an historic figure at all, but a production of second-century Christianity. But this reconstruction of the historic Jesus which they attack is really the

product not of second-century Christianity but of nineteenth-century Liberalism.

There arises here, however, another difficulty. If the teaching of Jesus was the suggested combination of a Jewish eschatological expectation of the coming of the kingdom with a world-renouncing ethic, why was he crucified by the Romans at the instigation of the high priests? One answer which is sometimes given is that the Messianic claim was deeply resented as blasphemous. This was no doubt used as an excuse to secure a condemnation, but it does not appear that Jesus ever openly claimed to be the Messiah: that was in any case a secret revealed only to a very small circle of disciples who were forbidden to make it public. It is even possible that this secret was what Judas betrayed,<sup>1</sup> but it is in any

<sup>1</sup> The betrayal is a difficulty which is not at first felt, and is often overlooked. Usually it is supposed that Judas betrayed some secret hiding-place; but there is nothing in the narrative to justify this. What the priests wanted was evidence to justify a condemnation, not information to lead to an arrest. It is also probable that the publication of the Messianic secret (perhaps perverted, see p. 45) was the reason why the crowd in Jerusalem so suddenly changed from cries of "Hosanna" to shouts of "Crucify him." They gladly welcomed the announcement of the coming of the kingdom, but the claim to be Messiah, when the kingdom was obviously not yet come, was regarded as a blasphemous absurdity. Possibly, too, the choice of Barabbas by the crowd

case clear that the official hostility is inadequately explained by a secret which had played no part in the public teaching of Jesus. We are thus driven to look in a different direction to find the reason for the hostility of the priests, and especially for its suddenness.

So far as we can see, there is no serious controversy between Jesus and the priests, often identified with the Sadducees,<sup>1</sup> until the last week in Jerusalem. This is natural: the priests were certainly as much opposed to the Zealots as was Jesus, and they do not appear to have accepted the Scribes' teaching as to the law. They were probably rich and somewhat politically minded ecclesiastics; to have doubted that the kingdom of

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was a movement towards Zealotism in preference to Quietism; but the problem of Barabbas is very difficult.

<sup>1</sup> The view which is generally accepted is that the Sadducees were a political party rather than a sect, and that the priests mostly belonged to it. This fact would be connected with the meaning of Sadducee, which is probably merely "Zadokite," from Zadok, David's high priest. It is unnecessary to discuss the question here, but I would wish to protest that the whole question of the real nature of Pharisees and Sadducees is not yet settled. The evidence of Josephus is usually less widely studied than that of Schürer, whose deservedly famous work has in some circles been treated with more respect than the documents on which it is based. There are instructive articles by B. D. Eerdmans and H. Oort in the *Theol. Tijdschrift*, January and May, 1914, on the question of the Pharisees, and my friend, Prof. Wensink, has drawn my attention to Leszynski, *Die Sadducäer*.

God was coming—ultimately—would have seemed to them a dangerously sceptical opinion, but the interim ethic which appealed to them was the adequate support of institutions rather than the promulgation of new ideas. That a Galilean fanatic was convinced that the kingdom of God was coming immediately might be disturbing to the crowd, but fortunately his teaching that men should abandon their possessions would go far to neutralize any bad results; and the doctrine that it was better to suffer persecution rather than rise in rebellion would have a positively beneficial effect upon minds apt to be inflamed by the dangerous incitements of the Zealots. But this complacent attitude received a rude shock when Jesus reached Jerusalem, and at once protested by word and action against the sale of animals and the changing of money in the Temple.

We are apt to overlook the significance of this event; but it was, I think, the immediate cause of the crucifixion. The priests were in possession of a commercial monopoly: in practice<sup>1</sup> no one could offer a sacrifice in the Temple except by buying a victim in a market controlled by the

<sup>1</sup> In theory it was no doubt possible, if any one were fortunate enough to find a victim which the priests would accept as without defect.



priests. No one could give money except in Jewish coin, to obtain which he was obliged to exchange the current Roman coinage at the table of the money-exchangers—also controlled by the priests—and for this of course he would pay a commission. Thus the same supply of Jewish coin would keep on an endless circuit, passing from the money-changer to the pious Jew who wished to contribute his offering, from him to the priest, and from the priest back to the money-changer, and each time the circle was completed there was a profit on the transaction.

It was against this commercial monopoly that Jesus protested when he spoke of a den of thieves. The den of thieves retaliated by accusing him of rebellion against the Romans, and in spite of his teaching of non-resistance to persecution they secured a conviction by making use of the information that Jesus regarded himself as the coming Messiah, who would reign in a kingdom which would take the place of the Roman Empire.

By a curious but intelligible process Christians came in the next generation to put on the Scribes and their successors, the Rabbis, the guilt of the judicial murder of Jesus. That is because the controversy between the Christians and the Jews was primarily a matter which concerned the

Scribes. It centred in the exposition of the law, and the interpretation of Scripture, especially the Messianic passages. It was natural to connect the existing Jewish opponents with the death of Jesus. But it seems to me that financial interest rather than theological hatred was the real cause of the accusation of the priests, though they dressed it up in a partly political, partly religious form. I do not think that history gives us reason for supposing that the financial interests of a wealthy class are an inadequate explanation of a failure of justice.

Another question may be conveniently raised at this point: did Jesus himself expect to be put to death? It is clear that the disciples believed—after the event—that he had foreseen this result, and interpreted his sayings in this manner. But it must always remain doubtful whether Jesus went up to Jerusalem with the expectation of death or of the coming of the kingdom. That he expected rejection by the rulers of Jerusalem is clear; but did that imply death? Again, that he expected ultimate triumph after this rejection is also clear; but was this triumph to be the parousia—the coming of the Son of Man revealed as Messiah—or a resurrection from the dead? In

the light of history Christian tradition decided for death and resurrection, rather than rejection and parousia, which is postponed to a future date. But did Jesus speak in this way himself? If he were convinced that he was going up to Jerusalem to die and rise again, why were the disciples thrown into such consternation by his death, what is the meaning of the cry of despair on the cross, and why did the disciples explain their downcast appearance by saying that they had hoped that he would redeem Israel? All these are questions easy to ask and difficult or impossible to answer; but they are really inherent in the gospels and are not raised by any love of destructive criticism.

Thus two related questions are finally reached, which almost all Christians since the time of St. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi have put in the foreground, yet Jesus himself never emphasized and probably never discussed in public. What did he think of himself? And what did he say of himself?

It is necessary to distinguish clearly between what Jesus openly said of himself, and what he thought and allowed a small circle of his disciples to know, but not to publish.

So far as can be seen from the synoptic narrative, when Jesus was speaking in public he said nothing of himself. He preached the kingdom, "for this

cause," he said, "I came out."<sup>1</sup> So far as his public activity was concerned his personality was entirely subordinate to his preaching. He might know, by the special revelation of God, what was the high position reserved for him in the coming kingdom, but it was his secret. For the public it was enough that he should deliver his message, that they should believe it and repent. Disciples or demoniacs who guessed at the truth were alike forbidden to reveal it; even John the Baptist, when he sent from prison to ask whether Jesus was "he who should come," received no definite answer. That he spoke as a prophet—in the spirit of the Lord—he admitted; those who said that he cast out devils by Beelzebub blasphemed not man, but the Holy Spirit. Very probably,<sup>2</sup> too, he took to himself the passages in

<sup>1</sup> Mark i., 38.

<sup>2</sup> The reason for hesitating is that the clearest indications are found only in passages peculiar to Matthew or Luke (*cf.* Matt. xii., 18, and Luke iv., 16 *ff.*); there is little or nothing to bear on the question in Mark. Personally, however, I think that although the teaching of the disciples may have emphasized the connexion of Jesus with the "Suffering Servant" more than Jesus did himself, it is still probable that the idea may be traced to him, because it is implied in the answer given to the disciples of John (Matt. xi., 5 = Lc. vii., 22), in a passage which comes from Q. The designation of Jesus as *παις* in Acts iii. and iv. is perpetuated in early liturgical usage (1 Clement, Didache, Martyr. Polycarpi, etc.), but it gives us little help in consequence of the difficult problem of the sources of Acts, raised in its most acute form in these chapters.

Isaiah which referred to the "Servant of the Lord" who was anointed with the Spirit in order to preach good news to the poor and was destined first to suffer rejection and indignity and afterwards to be exalted by God; but it is noteworthy that though this passage was afterwards regarded by Christians as Messianic, it was never given this interpretation by the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

This—that Jesus did not announce himself publicly as Messiah or Christ—is one of the most certain facts in the gospel narrative.<sup>2</sup> It is obscured if the fourth gospel be put on a level with the synoptic gospels, but it can scarcely be doubted if modern synoptic criticism be accepted.

On the other hand, it seems equally clear that Jesus was convinced that when the kingdom came he would be the Messiah,<sup>3</sup>—the King anointed by God,—and a very small inner circle of disciples had been allowed to share, or in any case had

<sup>1</sup> Noticeable too is the way in which the "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem is greeted by the crowd with cries in honour of the coming of the kingdom: it is in Mark not personally Messianic, though it is possibly so in Matthew, and more plainly so in Luke.

<sup>2</sup> The use of the phrase, Son of Man, does not invalidate this conclusion. It would break the line of the discussion too much if the point were argued in the text, but an additional note on pp. 54-57 endeavours to give the main points of the problem.

<sup>3</sup> Might we formulate this opinion more sharply by saying that Jesus believed that the exaltation promised to the Suffering Servant was his appointment as Messiah?

discovered, this secret. Probably, too, this conviction of Jesus was intimately connected with the voice of God which he had heard when he was baptized by John the Baptist. Unless the gospels are so hopelessly corrupt that no historical evidence can be gained from them, I do not see how this can be doubted. Jesus did not allow his disciples to publish the secret during his lifetime, but after his death they announced the fact in Jerusalem and regarded the resurrection either as the proof that Jesus was the Messiah, or as the moment when he became Messiah. It was this inner circle of disciples, and their preaching of the Messianic secret, which became the foundation of the Christianity which survived, but it is important to notice at once that on the one hand there must have been many disciples who had neither heard of nor accepted the Messianic secret, but remained waiting for the kingdom of God, and endeavouring to live as Jesus had instructed them, and on the other hand, that even the teaching of those who accepted the Messianic secret was very far removed from the developed doctrine of the incarnate Word which ultimately conquered the Roman Empire.

Such is a general statement of the view of the teaching of Jesus and of some of the difficulties

surrounding it, which seems to be reached by a study of the earliest parts of the gospels in the light thrown by Jewish apocalyptic literature. It has been called the tragedy of faith, but it really only represents the shipwreck of the hope of Liberal criticism in the nineteenth century to find in a critical reconstruction of the historic Jesus a solution for the problems of the present generation. If we go back a little we find that men believed in an infallible Bible, and that belief has been forced from us by the undeniable proof of fallibility. The same may be said of the belief in an infallible Church. But Liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century thought that historical criticism would remove all the misrepresentations of later tradition and reveal the figure of the historic Jesus as infallible.<sup>1</sup> Is that hope also to go? Yes, I fear so. It is impossible to find its fulfilment in Jesus if he conditioned his teaching by Jewish apocalypticism, and believed in

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there is a constant tendency, not only among Liberal Protestants, but also among many who would indignantly renounce the name, to confuse—not identify—Jesus with the Logos (see p. 158 f). It is permissible to explain Jesus in terms of a philosophy which he never used, but scarcely to make claims on his behalf to powers which he neither claimed nor exercised. It is, I think, the permanent contribution of Dr. Gore to modern theology that he made this so plain to those who were students in Oxford in the nineties, though of course I do not imply that this was his intention.

what was, after all, an illusory expectation of the coming of the kingdom of God. But is this a tragedy? It is, if we have any right to look anywhere for an infallible guide; but what if the desire for infallibility is altogether wrong? What if truth is something which we can grasp only in approximation, which can only be presented to the human mind in forms which are imperfect, so that each generation, and each individual, has to struggle to pierce, as it were, through the form to the underlying reality? Religion—to take a single manifestation of truth—may be regarded (though this is but one way of looking at it) as conversation between the Heavenly Father and his children. But that conversation is not carried on without difficulty, or without effort on the part of the children. It is their natural but mistaken instinct to try to find some way of escaping that difficulty and effort. For the striving of the Spirit in personal religion they have tried to substitute an infallible Church, an infallible Bible, an infallible historic Jesus. But all these have failed us, and we are driven back to a living religion of communion with God, without the intervention of any other guide claiming to be an infallible substitute for personal effort.

It is not a tragedy; and those who fight against



it as threatening to extinguish faith seem to me to be like men who have worked through the night and at break of day wish to cover up the windows, lest the light of their candles be made dim by the rising sun. For in the end—if men have but faith not in formularies but in the guidance of life—they come back to all that seems lost and find in it new and greater values. They come back to the Church and find in it a community of men who in every age have known best, and described best, what religion was to them. They come back to the Bible and find in it a collection of writings which have given classic expression to some of the secrets of spiritual life. They come back to the historic Jesus, and find, not an infallible escape from all those “modern difficulties,” which are their own, for them to solve, but a guide who shows them the ultimate values of life, lifts them—if only for a moment—above the details of daily duty, and reveals to them the eternal verities, in order that they may return to the work of the world, and the responsibilities of life, and work out the problems of this “interim” existence in the light of the vision which they have seen.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

## THE MEANING OF "SON OF MAN"

To have discussed this question in the body of the chapter would have disturbed the line of the argument to an undesirable degree. Nevertheless, without attempting to add to the knowledge of the professed theologian, it is probably well to summarize the main points of this extraordinarily difficult problem.

(1) In Aramaic "Son of Man" means a human being,<sup>1</sup> and is not a strange phrase, as it is in Greek or English.

(2) In Daniel the supernatural being who represents the kingdom of the Most High is described as "like unto a Son of Man"—*i.e.* a human figure in distinction to the supernatural beings representing the kingdom of Babylon, etc., which were like the lower animals. Moreover in Enoch, apparently with a literary reminiscence of Daniel, the "Elect One," who may with some certainty be called the Messiah, is described as "a Son of Man,"<sup>2</sup> and in the course of the visions he is referred to more than once as "that Son of Man," until at last he is given a name of supreme eminence, and appointed to act as judge at the assize of God. It is thus in Jewish literature the designation of a "man" in heaven, not on earth, who is predestined to become the Messiah.

(3) In the gospels, Jesus is frequently referred to as the Son of Man, not as the Messiah; but in the Acts and Epistles, he is frequently referred to as the Mes-

<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic (*bar nasha*) could be translated literally as "son of man" or idiomatically as "a man."

<sup>2</sup> Dr. R. H. Charles has argued in his edition of "Enoch" that

siah (Christ), and only once as the Son of Man. Son of Man, therefore, in the opinion of Christians, was correct as a designation of Jesus during his life, but not after his resurrection and ascension. It is thus in the gospels not the name of an essentially heavenly being. It is this which seems to differentiate the usage of the gospels from that of Jewish apocalyptic literature.

(4) In Oriental religions there are traces of a doctrine of a primeval divine Man, and it is thought by some scholars that this has affected, directly or indirectly, the Daniel-Enoch tradition. Personally I am sceptical on this point, though there is very little doubt but that the "Man" of some gnostic speculations is connected with this doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

Such are the main facts: there is comparatively little difference of opinion as to their nature, but much as to their application. Certain things seem to be probable, but the subject is eminently one which calls for caution, and the opening for error is considerable.

In the first place the possibility is great that in the earlier chapters of Mark "Son of Man" is merely a misunderstanding of Aramaic tradition, written or oral, and that it means<sup>2</sup> "a human being." This applies with peculiar force to the incident of the Sabbath. The question was not what the Messiah might

"Son of Man" in itself means "Messiah"; but the facts seem to be against him. Nor does there seem to be much in favour of the view that "Son of Man" in the gospels is the same thing as the "Suffering Servant," though in later *Christian* thought Messiah, Suffering Servant, and Son of Man were almost interchangeable.

<sup>1</sup> See W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*.

<sup>2</sup> Not that the writer of the gospel meant it in this sense, but that this had been its force in the original tradition.

do, but what ordinary human beings might do on the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, therefore the Son of Man is lord also of the Sabbath," is the Marcan text, and the "therefore" is meaningless unless the "Son of Man" in the conclusion is the same as the "man" in the premiss. The same argument also applies to the discussion of the forgiveness of sin at the healing of the paralytic. The point was not what the Messiah could do, but what a man could do, and the question of Messianic claims is not alluded to.

In the second place it seems to me almost certain that Jesus often referred to the coming of the Son of Man with a conscious allusion to Daniel, and probably to Enoch. But though it follows from the "Messianic secret" that he believed that he was this "Son of Man," it equally follows that he did not say so openly, and as a corollary from this it follows that the use of the phrase in the gospels, as we have them, has been influenced by the interpretation of the disciples, who desired to make the identification of Jesus with the Son of Man more obvious, and sometimes said "Son of Man" when Jesus really said "I," and sometimes perhaps "I," when Jesus really said "Son of Man." I incline to doubt whether Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man except in eschatological passages; and probably his hearers did not at the time realize, and were not intended to realize, that he meant himself. Of course criticism of the narrative on these lines is subjective, imperfect, and, no doubt, often inaccurate; but it seems to me to give a more intelligible explanation of the facts than any other method.

Finally, I must admit to being puzzled by the fact that "Son of Man" is characteristically used in the

gospels, including the fourth gospel, but only rarely in other books, and seems to have been interpreted by Christian writers as a description of the earthly Jesus, though the apocalyptic books and Jesus himself used it as a description of the heavenly Messiah, before he takes up the work of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> One would have expected that it would have been used by the Christians as a description of the exalted Jesus: but this is not the case, with the single exception of the dying vision of Stephen,<sup>2</sup> in spite of the fact that Jesus himself describes the Son of Man coming from heaven. The other difficulties in connexion with the Son of Man admit of possible, though tentative, solutions; but I know of no complete explanation of the fact that Luke did not use the phrase for the ascended Jesus in agreement with Jesus' own usage, and that of the apocalyptic writers, but applied it to Jesus in the days of his flesh. Moreover, it seems probable that the same thing is true even of Mark. Son of Man in the mouth of Mark, as distinct from the passages where it is probably an accurate quotation from Jesus himself, means Jesus on earth. It is thus not the equivalent of Messiah, a title which Mark avoids, but is rather "he who is to be Messiah." To some extent this may be explained as a somewhat confused recollection of Enoch, but the difficulty still remains that in Enoch Son of Man is a human figure in heaven, not a human figure on the earth.

<sup>1</sup> Once more the eschatological side of the synoptic gospels vindicates itself: it is plain enough that the writer used "Son of Man" as meaning "Jesus on earth"; but in the passages in which it is certain that Jesus uses it of himself, it refers to his coming as a heavenly being. Thus these passages are not Christian invention.

<sup>2</sup> In Apoc. i., 13, "like unto a son of man," is merely literary reminiscence from Daniel.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SPREAD OF THE CHURCH TO THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Marcan Tradition of the Resurrection—The Church in Jerusalem—The Hellenists—Cornelius and Modern Problems—The Roman Empire—The Cult of the Emperors—Astral Stoicism—The Mysteries—The Synagogue—The God-fearers.

THE events immediately succeeding the Crucifixion are the most obscure in Christian history; but certain facts emerge, even though the course of events cannot be precisely followed.

For the first days of the period the best information given us is still to be found in the gospel of Mark. Although the narrative of the actual events no longer exists,<sup>1</sup> it is clear from the indication in Mark xvi., 7 ("Tell his disciples that he

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi., 9-20, by the common consent of almost all critics—I know of no exceptions, though such may possibly exist—is not part of the original gospel. It is not, however, probable that the gospel ended with the "for they were afraid," of Mark xvi., 8, though a few eminent scholars, such as Wellhausen, take this view. Unless they are right the one thing certain is, as stated above, that the appearance of the risen Lord was placed in Galilee.

goes before you to Galilee, there you will see him”), that the disciples went to Galilee, and first saw the risen Lord there, and not in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. There is no reason to doubt this narrative. It was perfectly natural for the disciples to scatter back into Galilee when their journey to Jerusalem had ended in the crucifixion of their Master instead of in the coming of the kingdom. Nor is there any reason to doubt that they “saw” the Lord in Galilee; all are forced to agree on this point, even if they differ as to the nature of the vision. But after this the Marcan narrative gives but partial help.

It gives us, however, sufficient to enable us to see how the followers of Jesus arrived, not at only the fact that he had risen, but at some of the attendant circumstances. His grave had been found empty by certain women who had visited it; and a “young man” had spoken words which seemed to assure them of the Resurrection. It must be remembered, however, that whilst scientific criticism is bound to follow the best tradition so far as it relates facts, it is not obliged to accept their traditional explanation. We may concede the fact that the tomb was empty, even though we think it improbable that the corpse of Jesus had been materially resuscitated, or doubt whether

the report of the words of the "young man" has not been coloured by subsequent Christian belief.

To follow the story further it is necessary to turn to Acts. This is unfortunately less convincing in the earlier than in the later chapters. Comparing the third gospel and Acts with Mark it is clear that the writer of the former books omits altogether the episode of the flight of the disciples to Galilee and the vision of the risen Jesus. He is unaware of, if he does not deliberately reject, any story involving the absence of the disciples from Jerusalem. Nor does he give us any information as to the return of the disciples, nor specify the events leading to the establishment of a community at Jerusalem. Some things may, however, be gathered from his narrative and regarded as certain. The new community did not separate itself from the Jewish religion. The brethren remained steadfast to the same teaching as Jesus had given—the belief in the coming of the kingdom, and the need of repentance—but they seem to have laid less emphasis on the points of difference between themselves and the dominant parties of the Jews: we hear nothing more of controversy as to the Sabbath or the laws of purification. Thus they continued to frequent the Temple, and the leaders of the Jews, apart from some not



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very severe attempts at repression, took no active measures to expel them permanently. Only in two aspects did they differ seriously from their fellow-countrymen. In the first place, they believed that Jesus was the predestined Messiah, in support of which view they appealed to the Resurrection rather than the more ethical questions which Jesus had put in the foreground, until this gradually became the main subject of contention between them and the hierarchy. In the second place, they claimed that they had been granted a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and this—doubtless based on psychological experience—they regarded as the gift of the exalted Jesus, and as the fulfilment of eschatological prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the most difficult problems of interpretation is to find out what relation was supposed to subsist between the Spirit and the risen Jesus. As a preliminary we need to know what was the Jewish conception of the event which justified the statement that "the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." The spirit which spoke through Elijah—or the other prophets—was the Spirit of the Lord, but it was also in some sense the spirit of Elijah. I take it that the disciples regarded the Holy Spirit which came over them as in the same way the Spirit of God, and also the Spirit of Jesus. Another point of importance is the analogy from the other side of pneumatology—demonology—afforded by the fact that, as Josephus says, the demons were the ghosts of wicked men, and that yet the demons were also diabolic beings. Once more, what is the connection between these facts, the Syriac custom of giving the title of Lord to dead persons of eminent sanctity (much as Western Christians use the title Saint), and the Pauline identification of the Lord and the Spirit? The problem is obvious, but I

This gift of the Spirit, accompanied by curious physical phenomena—as extreme emotion frequently is—was especially valued, and was regarded as the confirmation of their belief, and the assurance of their favoured position in the kingdom.

The conversion of some Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem changed the situation. Born or educated, as these had been, in different parts of the Empire outside Palestine, they naturally united the liberal principles of the Dispersion to the teaching of Jesus. Their doctrinal innovations provoked the authorities to put to death the leader of the movement, the proto-martyr Stephen, and to disperse the Christian community. But the Apostles, we are told, remained, and the older Hebrew Christians apparently rallied again in Jerusalem in a church which, according to tradition, continued for some two generations. But the story of Christianity is the story of those who were driven out of Jerusalem, not of those who remained, and the most remarkable fact—assumed in Acts, but passed over without explanation—is that Peter, the original leader of the community at Jerusalem, moved over to the Hellenistic development, and

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do not know of any treatise which satisfactorily deals with the whole subject.

the leadership of the disciples at Jerusalem was taken by James, the Lord's brother.

The Hellenistic movement, urged on by persecution, spread rapidly to places which were more Gentile than Jewish; and the question could not long be postponed, whether the gospel might be preached to Gentiles without insisting on their becoming Jews and submitting to circumcision. The author of the Acts gives in order the stages in which the treatment of this problem developed. First comes the conversion, reception of the Spirit, and baptism—notice the order of events—of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. This settled the question of principle, and the Hellenistic movement next spread rapidly to Antioch, where it formed a new centre of activity and under the leadership of Barnabas and Paul undertook a further extension of missionary work. Then we have the account of the mission to Cyprus and Galatia of Barnabas and Paul, representing the church of Antioch, with a wholesale and apparently unconditional admission of Gentiles. This stimulated the older community at Jerusalem to protests and hostile propaganda, and to the demand that all converts should be circumcised and observe the Law. Lastly, we have the story of the council of Jerusalem, which laid down some-

what obscure conditions for the conduct of Gentile Christians but was in the main a triumph for the Antiochene mission.

Henceforward Hellenistic Christianity was committed to missionary propaganda in the Roman Empire on lines differing from those of the Jewish missionaries or of Judaistic Christians, and—though this was no doubt not recognized at the time—it was inevitably destined, as the condition of success, to adopt Græco-Roman or Græco-Oriental forms of expression, both in theology and cultus, and to lose much of its originally Jewish character. It is therefore necessary at this point to break off from the history of Christianity and turn to the consideration of the Roman Empire, into which it now began to make its way. But before entering on this subject it is well to emphasize the abiding importance of the first of the incidents just enumerated—the acceptance by St. Peter of the Roman centurion.

The conversion of Cornelius represents the recognition of facts and a consequent change of principle. Up to that time nationality, whether obtained by birth or by proselytism, which is only another name for naturalization, and circumcision, which was the national custom, were the necessary conditions of entry into the kingdom of God.

When the kingdom came all its members would enjoy the gift of the Spirit, and the Christians who had received the Spirit had done so as a foretaste of the privileges of the Messianic period. That any one should enjoy the gift of the Spirit and nevertheless be outside the kingdom of God was a contradiction in terms. Therefore when Cornelius received the gift of the Spirit, though he had neither become a Jew nor been circumcised, the Christians drew the conclusion which the logic of facts impressed on them, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." The early founders of the Hellenistic church accepted the witness of the Spirit as superior to the authority of custom or tradition, even though the tradition had the authority of the words of Moses and of the thunder of Sinai.

It is impossible not to feel that one of the ways in which official Christianity in the great orthodox churches, as well Protestant as Catholic, is standing at the cross roads, is that it is hesitating whether to follow the example of the Hellenistic or the Judaizing Christians. What makes a Christian? is a question more and more often heard. The official churches answer, according to their respective tenets: "Baptism," "The acceptance of a Christocentric creed," "Episcopal orders," "The

recognition of the Pope,"<sup>1</sup> and appeal to the Scripture and the authority of tradition. Historically they are all more or less right, and on the whole the more "Catholic" the greater is their historical justification. But historically the Judaizing Christians were right, for the authority of tradition and scriptural proof was on their side. The one thing necessary, however, was the evidence of existing spiritual life, and that was on the side of Cornelius and St. Peter. So it is also today. There are Quakers and Unitarians who have little claim to be regarded as Christians if the matter is to be settled by an appeal to historical evidence. But they have the *testimonium spiritus sancti*, the witness of existing spiritual life. No one who has ever had the privilege of admission to their devotions can doubt that their religious life has exactly the same spiritual quality as that of the Christians who are historically most correct. The "great churches," if they rely on historical evidence, have unanswerable arguments in favour of rejecting the claims of this new type of Christianity,<sup>2</sup> and can do all over the world what they have done in Holland—degrade "Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Or they combine these in varying proportions.

<sup>2</sup> I am not writing in the interests of "reunion"—which I distrust—but of a frank recognition of the value and equality of many institutional forms of the one spiritual life.

tian" to the recognized title of a special type of theological thought. But if in this way they rest their appeal on the past, to the past they will soon belong, for, in the language of St. Peter, who are they to withstand God? In whatever language it be expressed, the foundation of Christianity is the possession of the Spirit, not theological formulæ or the preservation of traditional forms, and the Spirit will not long remain with those who refuse to listen to its witness.

The most remarkable feature of the history of the early Empire is that it represents a double stream of progress. Political progress was constantly moving from West to East, but religious life was moving from East to West, and the confluence of these two streams produced many strange eddies of opinion and practice.

At the time when Christianity first began to enter the Empire at Antioch—high up in the westward flowing stream—the Empire was still young. Many things, such as the government of the provinces, were comparatively undeveloped, but it is allowable for the present purpose to look somewhat further ahead, and regard the Empire as it became after a slightly longer development, in order to understand the principles which it embodied.

If we consider the Roman Empire first of all from its political side, which was in many ways the most important, it is impossible to avoid noticing in how many ways it reminds us of our own time. Again and again in reading about it we have an uncanny feeling that it is not a description of something past, but only a slightly distorted picture of what is going on now, or may be going to happen in the immediate future. And, though the policy of the Roman Empire with regard to nationality was more like that of the British Empire than anything else in modern civilization, the condition of society in the Empire resembled some sides of American life as much as anything existing in the old world.

In the first place it was a society in which the governing class belonged, as a whole, to a different race from the classes which were being governed. There was at the head of affairs a small Roman population which was with extraordinary skill managing affairs, and extending the limits of civilization, but below it there was a great crowd which was not Roman, but was serving the Romans and doing the work of the Empire under their guidance—a crowd drawn from Greece, Gaul, Spain, Syria, Armenia, Egypt, Africa, Mesopotamia, and being slowly welded together by learn-



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ing to work better, and in some cases to think more straightly. That was the task which the Roman Empire was trying to fulfil by a system of provinces and municipalities, each with some degree of autonomy, but all ultimately responsible to the central authority.

No book gives a more interesting glimpse of the working of the system than those letters which preserve the correspondence of the Emperor Trajan and Pliny when the latter was governor of a province. It shows that the Empire was faced by certain grave difficulties; and those which most come to the front are, in the first place, that there were not enough good men who were prepared to take up the service of the state, and, in the second place, that in the province over which Pliny was set the local administration was partly foolish and partly corrupt. The men who were in charge of the government of the towns were spending money not in the real interests of the town to which they belonged, but in the interests of themselves, and of their friends. The municipal government was corrupt, and where it was not corrupt it was often foolish, so that the municipal authorities became the easy prey of the rich Greeks or Syrians who made their living as parasites upon the system of the municipal govern-

ment. It was failing, then, because it was partly corrupt and partly unintelligent. And as the necessary outcome of these difficulties there was a constant tendency on the part of the authorities to truckle to the baser parts of the population, to spend money in organizing games, wild beast fights, and other things which appealed to their lower instincts.

Those were the difficulties against which an upright and able governor like Pliny had to fight; they were throughout its history the difficulties of the Roman Empire on the political side. We cannot but admire the enormous energy of that comparatively small body of Romans who did, in spite of these obstacles, contrive for at least three centuries to maintain a successful struggle, even though we are obliged to admit that in the end the Empire failed; partly because it did not succeed completely in overcoming its difficulties; and also, I think, partly because that small body of men was unequal to the task. They became a tired nation, they let the work fall from their hands, and the Dark Ages came.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Such, at least, is the impression made on me by the picture of society in the fourth century so graphically presented by Dr. Dill. The great country houses of Italy and Gaul show us great culture and considerable piety, but not much energy. A hundred years later they had ceased to exist.

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If we turn to the stream of Oriental religions, which was flowing westward into the Empire, and look for the part which was most closely connected with the progress of Roman civilization, there can be no hesitation in choosing the cult of the emperors.

The belief that kings are divine is originally an Oriental belief, so far as the history of the religious life of the Roman Empire is concerned, though it may have belonged in almost prehistoric days to primitive Roman religion and is probably part of primitive religion almost everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

Its immediate history in the period which concerns us seems to be that it was found in the East by Alexander the Great, was adopted by the Ptolemies and the Seleucid kings, his successors in Egypt and Asia, and passed from them to the Cæsars. It was at first especially strong in the eastern provinces, but gradually became the central cult of the official life of the Empire.

The memory of the struggle for life and death which was waged between this cult and the Church in the second and third centuries makes us inclined to ignore its true nature. To us it is a ridiculous

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. G. Frazer, *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship*, and the third edition of *The Golden Bough*.

superstition, only possible to sycophantic courtiers. But it had its other side. The pagan world of the first and second centuries was not so keenly alive as the Jewish or Christian churches to the claims of monotheism, but it felt deeply the truth of a theology which emphasized the working of God in the world through the institutions of established society. Nor is it wonderful if it saw something divine in the Roman Empire and in its head—the Cæsar. The period which ended with Actium had been a century of incessant struggle. Massacre, civil war, revolution, bloodshed, proscription, and terror were its predominant features. Property had been without protection, and human life without security. But with the reign of Augustus a new age seemed to have begun, the golden years of peace had returned—it was the work of the gods. Just as the Jews had comforted themselves with the hope that the kingdom of God was at hand, the Romans were proud to believe that it had already come; nor for a generation to whom the working of God in the world seemed always to appeal most vividly when it was presented in human form, clothed with the majesty of exceptional ability and unusual power, was it difficult to believe that Augustus, whose efforts had thus wonderfully brought peace and

order into a world of strife and confusion, was himself divine.<sup>1</sup>

This form of heathenism naturally brought with it a world-affirming ethic. This and its concept of law were its permanent contribution to progress.<sup>2</sup> It calls men to forget their personal interests not for the sake of their neighbours as individuals, but for society regarded as a living organism, worth more, in some mysterious and almost mystical way, than the sum of the individuals which compose it, just as a man is more than the sum of his members. It was in one sense a religion, inasmuch as—at least to some minds—it was the working of God in the world, and the service of the state was really the service of God who willed the state. It would be very unfair to deny to this attitude a spiritual character and an insight into truth. But the intellect asks for more than the mere recognition of “God in Society”; it

<sup>1</sup> A rich collection of inscriptions and quotations referring to the emperors as “Divine,” “Saviours,” etc., is given by P. Wendland in an extremely important article, *σώτρηρ*, in the *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1904, p. 335 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Of course I do not mean that no other system ever had a world-affirming ethic. But the Roman Empire so stamped it into the human mind that within the limits of existing Western civilization it can never again be forgotten. Men may evade or exploit it, but even if with Pecksniffian lips, they will recognize as an axiom their “duty to society,” which is a different (though allied) concept from the evangelical “love of neighbour.”

desires a "view of the world," and the intellect of the Roman Empire found this not in the inherited Roman religion (which it supported, at the instigation of Augustus, partly as an interesting form of archæology, partly as a convenient sedative for the lower classes), but in a combination of Stoicism and Astralism<sup>1</sup> which formed another eddy in the westward-flowing stream of religion and theological speculation.

This Astral Stoicism, perhaps best known to us now through the writings of Seneca, was probably introduced in the first place by the influence of Posidonius of Apamea. He had many pupils, of whom Cicero is the most widely known, and Manilius, the author of the *Astronomica*, perhaps the best representative.<sup>2</sup>

The main features of this *weltanschauung* were a strict determinism based on the observation of the unvarying movements of the astral world and the theory that the same unswerving "fate" which

<sup>1</sup> I think that Astralism is a better word than Astrology, because in practice Astrology has come to mean foretelling the future by the stars. The teaching of—for instance—Manilius is a great deal more than this.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the *Disputationes Tusculanæ* and especially the *Somnium Scipionis*. Posidonius' own writings are not extant; of the growing modern literature on his work and influence some of the most important are Corsen, *De Posidonio Rhodio*, and E. Bevan's *Stoics and Sceptics*.

guided the sun and planets and stars also guided human beings, so that there was a fixed connection between the circling stars and the cycle of mortal life, because the stars were partly subject to the same "Destiny" which reigned supreme in the universe, and partly were in some mysterious manner its agents. "Fate rules the world and all is established by fixed law"<sup>1</sup> is the conclusion to which Manilius comes.

The supreme end of man was the complete surrender of himself to this omnipotent force, that he might so be identified with the deity as to find his sole pleasure in submitting to the decrees which he could in no case avoid, and thus in a certain sense achieve the presence of God in man—*inpendendus homo est, deus esse ut possit in ipso*.<sup>2</sup> There was probably some degree of difference between individual members of this type of religious thought as to the emphasis which was laid on the direct influence of the stars or planets; and the most elevated natures, such as Seneca, seem to have been Stoics and Determinists rather than Astral worshippers. They had broken with the

<sup>1</sup> "Fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege."—Man., iv., 14.

<sup>2</sup> Manilius, iv., 407. The best statement of this view is F. Cumont: *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, 1912. Cf. also his *La Religion solaire du Paganisme romain*, 1909; and *Fatalisme astral et Religions antiques*, 1912.

ancestral mythology, and they did not replace it. In general terms they perceived the working of the same law in the natural and spiritual worlds, and they recognized the mediated working of that law alike in the stars of heaven and in the ruler of the Roman Empire on earth. They submitted to both, and so far as in them lay co-operated with both; they believed that in the end this was the way of life and the road of happiness, but they did not pretend to explain in detail why it was so. It was an austere religion, but it was in no sense a bad or false religion. A true feeling for an *anima naturaliter Christiana* almost made the Christians of later centuries regard Seneca, its most remarkable adherent, as a Christian saint, and I cannot refrain from quoting part of Dr. Dill's brilliant and sympathetic description of Seneca's religious position:

Seneca had one great superiority over other equally religious souls of his time, which enables him to approach mediæval and modern religious thought—he had broken absolutely with paganism. He started with belief in the god of the Stoic creed. He never mentions the Stoic theology which attempted to reconcile him with the gods of the Pantheon. In spite of all his rhetoric he tries to see the facts of human life and the relation of the human spirit to the Divine in the light of reason, with no intervening veil of



legend. God is to Seneca the great Reality, however halting human speech may describe him as Fate, or Law, or Eternal Reason, or watchful Providence. God is within us, in whatever mysterious way, inspiring good resolves, giving strength in temptation, with all-seeing eye watching the issue of the struggle. God is without us, loading us with kindness even when we offend, chastising us in mercy, the goal of all speculation, he from whom we proceed, to whom we go at death. The true worship of him is not in formal prayer and sacrifice, but in striving to know and imitate his infinite goodness. We mortal men in our brief life on earth may be citizens of two commonwealths, one the Rome or Corinth of our birth, the other that great city of gods and men, in which all are equally united, male and female, bond and free, and children of a common Father. In this ideal citizenship, in obedience to the law of the spiritual city, the eternal law which makes for righteousness, man attains his full freedom and final beatitude in communion with kindred souls.

Yet, as in mediæval and Puritan theory, there is in Seneca a strange conflict between pessimism and idealism. To the doomed philosophic statesman of the reign of Nero the days of man's life are few and evil. Life is but a moment in the tract of infinite age, and so darkened by manifold sins and sorrows that it seems, as it did to Sophocles, a sinister gift. On the other hand, its shortness is a matter of no importance; the shortest life may be full and glad if it be dignified by effort and resignation and conformity to the great law of the universe. The wise and pious man, ever conscious of his brief time of probation, may brighten each passing day into a festival and lengthen it into

a life. The shortness of life is only an illusion, for long or short has no meaning when measured by the days of eternity. And the philosopher may unite many lives in one brief span. He may join himself to a company of sages who add their years to his, who counsel without bitterness and praise without flattery; he may be adopted into a family whose wealth increases the more it is divided; in him all the ages may be combined in a single life. To such a spirit death loses all terrors. The eternal mystery indeed can be pierced only by imaginative hope. Death we may be sure, however, can only be a change. It may be a passage into calm unconsciousness, as before our birth, which will release us from all the griefs and tumults of the life here below. It may, on the other hand, prove to be the morning of an eternal day, the entrance to a radiant and untroubled world of infinite possibilities. In any case, the spirit which has trained itself in obedience to eternal law will not tremble at a fate which is surely reserved for the universe, by fire or flood or other cataclysmal change. The future in store for the soul is either to dwell for ever among things Divine, or to sink back again into the general soul, and God shall be all in all.<sup>1</sup>

That is heathenism at its best: it is very like some forms of Christianity, and is certainly not a religion of which anyone need be ashamed. "We can only know in part, while we live here, and we may be sure that when that which is perfect is

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, second edition, p. 331 ff.

come Christ will own many as his friends who have borne the Cross without hoping for the Crown."<sup>1</sup> For indeed the life of a man like Seneca, trying to serve Nero in the empire, which was God's institution, and yet to keep his soul clean, is truly a picture of one who tried to bear the Cross in the form in which it was presented to him.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Seneca, and the Stoics generally, failed. Their religious system proved to have no real vitality or power of convincing the majority of their hearers. One reason was because the spiritual atmosphere of Seneca's religion was too rarefied to be breathed by the ordinary man: it dealt too much in abstractions. But even more important is that in its presentation so much emphasis was laid on conduct that it ceased to be primarily religious, and became a system of ethics, touched with emotion, and justified by being brought into connection with a general view of the universe. It is very near religion, and contained many religious elements, but these were not central, and the more definitely religious, though far less

<sup>1</sup>Dean Inge in *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Other views have of course been held about Seneca's character: no doubt he had his failings, as indeed he admits, but I feel that the more anyone reads of Seneca the higher becomes the opinion formed of him.

intellectual and often far less ethical, classes turned in a different direction to the so-called mystery religions, which also came from the East, and frequently contained a large proportion of the astral stoicism of the followers of Posidonius.

All the many forms of these Oriental mystery religions have certain points in common, though each has its own distinguishing features. Roughly speaking, they were cults, which narrated how at some epoch of history there had been a great being, either man or god, who, while living on the earth, had found not only a way through the difficulties of human life, but also, by traversing the road of suffering, the secret of a safe passage along that dangerous journey which the soul of man must make when it goes at death from the regions of this world into that which is beyond, and tries to win a path to the divine realms of bliss. To their followers they had entrusted this secret; so that men, by accepting their teaching in faith, and by performing certain mysterious acts, might follow their example, and rise superior to the misfortunes of life now, and at death find salvation from the snares and onslaughts of their "ghostly enemies."

There was a great number of mystery religions, and the more intellectual of their adherents probably thought that they were all different ways of

stating the same truths, and of obtaining the same advantages. Moreover all of them were united, to a varying degree, which it is not easy to define precisely, with astral philosophy. Possibly to some minds the mysteries were nothing more than divinely instituted means by which man can more fully and more consciously unite with the purpose and with the very life of God. To such minds the mysteries were not inconsistent with determinism; they were the means of accepting, not of avoiding, Fate. But probably they were a minority: to many minds determinism is an unattractive and even horrible doctrine, and the most attractive appeal which any cult can make is the offer of providing a means of escaping destiny. Thus there were probably many who approached the mysteries in the belief that by linking themselves in this way to a Redeemer-God they would be able to escape the decrees of the Fate which was determined by the stars. It was probably a question of education and surroundings which decided whether an initiate regarded any or all of these redeemer-gods as identical with the Logos, which was one of the philosophic descriptions of God, or accepted a more definitely separate existence for the gods or heroes of the local mythologies, such as Tammuz, Attis, Isis, Mithras, or Sandan. It

will be obvious that there was room for a great number of shades of thought. Moreover though the original and best form of the mysteries was probably in sympathy with the desire of union with the astral powers, and the Destiny of which they were the agents, the longing to escape Fate led to the development of what came to be known as Gnosticism, in which the planets and Destiny were regarded as wholly evil and hostile to man. Such a theory is obviously really the very reversal of the creed of Seneca: it leaves no room for any world-accepting ethics, and at the same time it is not really allied to the world-renouncing ethic of Jesus, but is a world-condemning ethic. Properly understood the teaching of Jesus never condemns and hates the world, and his ethic can be made complementary to a world-affirming ethic: but that is impossible for the teaching of the Gnostics. This question, however, must be dealt with later, for Gnosticism, in a partially Christian form, was one of the most formidable enemies of the Church in the second century.

In whatever form, however, the mysteries found acceptance, they were genuinely religious. On the ethical side they were weak, but they strove to attain that experience of union with a higher reality which is central in religion: and with an instinct

which seems to be universal in humanity they felt that this was effected by means of the common facts of daily life which, to the unseeing eye, are but the processes of generation and birth, eating and drinking, washing and dressing, and, the last act of common life, dying; for to the initiate all became touched with sacramental splendour and eternal significance as the outward visible signs of the progress of a Divine life, which was born again, nourished, cleansed and cared for, and finally passed through the last great mystery to free and untrammelled expression.

The imagery was often confused, but it led in the mysteries to countless combinations of religious feasts and of ceremonies in which birth and death were symbolically represented. Our knowledge of the actual ceremonies and liturgies is very small, as almost all documentary evidence has been destroyed, but in a famous papyrus at Paris<sup>1</sup> we have a liturgy which has been copied and used for

<sup>1</sup> Supplément grec de la Bibliothèque nationale, No. 574, published by Wessely in the *Denkschriften der K. K. Akademie zu Wien, Philosoph-hist. Classe XXXVI.* (1888), p. 56 ff., and afterwards edited as *Eine Mithras Liturgie*, by A. Dieterich with great learning and acumen. The view expressed in his title connecting it with Mithras has not met with universal approbation, and is rejected by F. Cumont: the point is obscure, and those who find the mysteries at the circumference rather than the centre of their studies will do well to avoid too fixed an opinion.

magical purposes. The liturgy itself is probably not earlier than the middle of the second century, but it may be used with some reserves to illustrate the point of the mysteries at almost any period.

O first source of my being<sup>1</sup> . . . [says the initiate,] if it indeed be thy good will to grant that I pass, from the nature which now binds me, to the birth of immortality, that after this present necessity which now presses me down I may enjoy the vision of the immortal beginning through the immortal spirit . . . that I may be born again in spirit,<sup>2</sup> that I may be consecrated, and the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup> may inspire me. . . .

The Greek is not easy to translate accurately but it is clear that the general sense is that the initiate is praying for a regeneration to eternal life in a manner which illustrates and is illustrated by Christian practice. In the same way in the same document the initiate says at the end of the service:

O Lord, I have been born again, and depart that I may grow, and having grown I die; through birth that gives life I have been born, and I go to be released in death, as thou hast created, ordained, and instituted the sacrament.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *γένεσις πρώτη τῆς ἐμῆς γενέσεως.*

<sup>2</sup> *ἵνα νοήματι μεταγεννηθῶ.*

<sup>3</sup> *πνεύση ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸ ἱερὸν πνεῦμα.*

<sup>4</sup> The Greek is so full of playing on the word that it can only be translated very imperfectly: "κύριε πάλιν γενόμενος ἀπογίγνομαι αὐξόμενος, καὶ αὐξηθεὶς τελευτῶ, ἀπὸ γενέσεως ζωογόνου γενόμενος εἰς ἀπογενεσίαν ἀναλυθεὶς πορεύομαι, ὡς σὺ ἔκτισας, ὡς σὺ ἐνομοθέτησας καὶ ἐποίησας μυστήριον."



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It is surely difficult to ignore the religious mysticism of these utterances. Or, again, who can refuse to recognize the truly religious spirit in the prayer of Lucius to Isis?<sup>1</sup> Yet though this also belongs to the second century it almost certainly reflects the spirit of the mysteries of an earlier period.

Holy one, constant Saviour of the race of men, so bountiful in cherishing them, so tender in the mother's love which thou dost bestow on the wretched. Nor day nor night nor shortest moment passes unmarked by thy benefits without the help of thy protection for men on sea and land, without thy succouring hand outstretched to ward off the storms of life. Powers above and powers below alike wait on thy will. Thou makest the world to revolve, thou givest his light to the Sun, thou art ruler of the universe, thou dost tread Hell under thy feet. To thee are due the harmony of the spheres, the return of the seasons, the obedience of the elements. At thy bidding the breezes blow, the clouds gather, the seeds of the earth bring forth their fruit. Birds which pass across the sky, beasts which wander on the hills, serpents which lurk underground, the monsters which swim the deep, all tremble before thy majesty. But I am too feeble in mind to speak thy praise, too poor in worldly goods to pay thee sacrifice, nor have I wealth in utterance to tell forth all that I feel of thy grandeur. A thousand lips, a thousand tongues, and unbroken eternity of unfailing praise would not avail; yet what the pious soul, poor though it be, may do in its humility, that

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius, *Metamorph.*, xi.

will I perform. For ever more shall thy holy god-head be treasured in the thoughts of my inmost soul.

Such was the mystery religion. It was spiritually strong, but it was weak intellectually and ethically; it had not cut itself free from mythology, and its ethic was lower than that of Seneca or of the philosophers in general.

If we now go on a little further we come to another eddy in the westward-flowing stream of religion, the Jewish mission, of which the history has not yet been properly written, partly because it has been approached chiefly by Christian writers, who seem to have thought that it would detract from the honour due to God to ascribe any merit to his chosen people, partly because a knowledge of Semitic life and letters has rarely been combined with an equal knowledge of the conditions of life in the empire. But for the present purpose it is sufficient to notice that on the one hand the Jews were learning quite as much as teaching: the evidence of Philo, who regarded himself as a moderately conservative Jew, and of the Sibylline oracles shows that Judaism was moving very rapidly along Liberal lines, as we should call it, and giving up much of the distinctive character of Palestinian Judaism. Perhaps for this reason

it was proving very attractive to the Græco-Roman world, and the synagogues were drawing to themselves many who desired a monotheism which was clear and definitive, but not united to so uncompromising a determinism as marked the teaching of the philosophers.

To these three factors—the astral determinism of the Stoic philosophers, the sacramental religion of the mysteries, and the monotheistic teaching of the Jewish synagogues, the Christian mission added itself, as another eddy in the stream of cults from the East. But it must not be supposed that the Christian mission, or the other forms of Eastern religion, succeeded mainly by means of converting the convinced members of other cults. The truth seems to be that in the Roman Empire the ancestral religion—a combination of Roman and Greek cults—had ceased to hold the greater part of the population. The agricultural gods of the Latin race, and deities of the Greek Olympus, had been silently abandoned by all except their official representations, and lived only in popular phrases or in poetic literature; they no longer represented the religious life of the community. Nevertheless the men of the first century were essentially religious; they were constantly seeking not so much after God as after an adequate theology and satisfying

worship, to stimulate the spiritual life of which they were conscious, and express the experience of God which they enjoyed. Their heritage from the past was failing them and they turned for help to the Oriental cults which were streaming into the empire. Yet perhaps not many accepted them without reservation, and convinced and whole-hearted adherents of any form of religion were few in comparison with the large numbers of "honorary members of all religions." These were inclined to take an intelligent and sympathetic interest in every cult, but to see the mixture of merit and demerit in each clearly enough to dislike the limitations of an exclusive membership in any. In every age all growing forms of religion have been surrounded by a wide circle of these "honorary members." They have spread by absorbing them more and more into the central body, and during the period of vigorous youth the preachers of each cult have done their best to meet the requirements of their "honorary members" in the matters of institutional life or theological expression, because they have felt that these things are subordinate to the Divine fire which it is their privilege to hand on, and that it is the living flame, not the torch carrying it, which is important. It is more or less of an accident that the circle of

this kind which surrounded the Jewish mission—the “God-fearers” (οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν)—is that best known to us, for no doubt a similar circle surrounded all the other Eastern cults. But it is in any case clear that the God-fearers, the honorary members of the Synagogue, were the most frequent converts to Christianity. The Christian missionaries from Antioch used habitually to preach in the Jewish synagogues so long as they were permitted, and their teaching, which avoided the circumcision and the ritual law, so distasteful to the Gentile mind, found a ready hearing among the God-fearers. It is also easy to see that this did not tend to soften the attitude of the Jew to the Christian. It is bad enough to find that a preacher whom you have allowed to speak to your flock is a heretic, it is infinitely worse if he proves more attractive than yourself to those whose conversion had seemed to be almost accomplished.

Thus the history of the progress of Christianity in the empire soon became that of the conversion of God-fearers, and Catholic Christianity is the outcome of the influence upon one another of the Christian missionaries with their primarily Jewish and eschatological-ethical teaching, and the “God-fearing” public which brought with it a great

portion of the world-accepting ethic, the Stoic philosophy, and the sacramental mysticism which were to so large an extent part of the intellectual current coin of the first and second centuries.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ANTIOCHENE MISSION AND EARLY GENTILE CHRISTIANITY

The Acts and Pauline Epistles—The Development of the Church—Judaizers and Hellenizers—Greek and Jewish Views of Salvation—St. Paul—Christology—Baptism—The Eucharist.

FROM the time when the establishment of the Antiochene and Jerusalem missions ensured the passage of Christianity into the Roman Empire its history may roughly be divided into two parts—the growing divergence between the two missions, and the mutual influence upon each other of the missionaries and the “God-fearers,” which produced the rapid development of thought and practice from which the Catholic Church finally emerged.

We have, however, to remember that our sources of information are very limited. The Acts and the Epistles are all that we possess; they only give us glimpses into the development of events, and confine themselves to the spread of Christianity

in Asia Minor and Europe under the leadership of St. Paul. It is certain that there must have been other missionaries, both from the Antioch and Jerusalem schools, but we knew nothing about them. Who, for instance, founded the Church at Rome, or at Alexandria, and under what circumstances?

Moreover, our knowledge is limited not only by the extent, but also by the special purposes of the writers of the two extant sources. This is, of course, obviously true of the Pauline epistles, even though the fact has often been overlooked. There has been a tendency to regard these epistles as a body of theological literature intended for the purpose of explaining the doctrines of Christianity; but, as a matter of fact, if we read the Epistles without presupposition, it is at once clear that they are controversial letters written not to describe the central teaching of Christianity, but to discuss points as to which Christians were not in agreement among themselves. The central doctrines are not argued about; they are the basis for discussion; and thus, though it sounds a paradox, if we wish to reconstruct them we must not take the points which St. Paul discusses at length, but those which he assumes as ground common to him and to his adversaries, and there-



fore states in a few short sentences. It is obvious that this cannot always be done with any attempt at completeness, and it is fortunate that we possess in the Acts material with which to supplement and correct our investigations into the Epistles. On the other hand, if we turn to inquire into the controversies of the primitive church rather than into its central doctrines the Epistles are far more important than the Acts, because in Acts a veil seems to be drawn over many sides of the early disputes.

Who the writer of the Acts was, whether he was St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul, or someone who used Lucan material, is probably an insoluble question. But in any case it is probable that the book was written shortly before the end of the first century,<sup>1</sup> and that the writer intended to perform for Christianity the same office as Josephus did for the Jews. He was writing in order to influence Roman opinion, and selected his events and the form of his narrative so as best to show what had been the historical relationship of the Church to the Jews, and to the Roman authorities.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier date has been recently suggested by A. von Harnack, but valuable though his contributions to the study of the Lucan writings have been, he has not convinced many of his German colleagues that the earlier date is right, and I do not think that his arguments will ultimately prove acceptable.

He therefore discussed the growth and development of Hellenistic Christianity as contrasted with the Jewish Christianity of the church of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> but did not say anything about the quarrels which took place between the different parties within the Hellenistic movement. Thus although it is possible to obtain a general picture of the main features of early Hellenistic Christianity by using the Acts and Epistles together, the details are often blurred, and any exact reconstructions are consequently doubtful, even though they must sometimes be made to serve as working hypotheses.

The most important characteristics of this nascent Gentile Christianity can best be seen by a summary description of the stages which preceded it, and of its ultimate form.

The first stage was the ministry of Jesus: Christianity<sup>2</sup> meant at that time the belief that he was

<sup>1</sup> Acts is clearly concerned chiefly with Hellenistic Christianity; but the writer is also anxious to prove that the Church of Gentile Christians is the true successor not only of the Church of Jerusalem but also of Israel itself. The Christians, not the Jews, are the true inheritors of the promises of prophecy, which the Jews had misunderstood. In this respect Acts prepares the way for the Epistle of Barnabas, which, while claiming the text of the Jewish scriptures for Christianity, ascribes the exegesis of the Jews to the operation of the devil.

<sup>2</sup> The use of the word is, of course, an anachronism, but it has the excuse of convenience.

right in announcing the speedy coming of the kingdom, and in demanding repentance.

The second stage was that of the Church in Jerusalem; it added to the belief of the preceding stage that Jesus was the Messiah who should come. It was not otherwise different, though the addition made is, of course, considerable, and from it emanated the Jerusalem mission. It did not break radically with the Law or with Judaism.

The third stage is the Antiochene mission, which in turn differed from the preceding only in its altered relation to the Law and to Judaism, opening the door to Gentile converts without asking that they should accept circumcision or the ceremonial law.

The fourth stage is Gentile Christianity which extended the Christological belief concerning Jesus so far as to regard him as the centre of a cult. It therefore ascribed a divine nature to him,<sup>1</sup> and interpreted Baptism and the commemoration of the Last Supper as the equivalents of the heathen mysteries.

This bald enumeration of the features of the four stages is of course misleading when given

<sup>1</sup> That is, of course, not a Jewish thought; however exalted the Messiah may have been, he was not divine. The strict monotheism of the Jews made them of all ancient nations the least likely to ascribe divinity to a king.

without further explanation, and it draws unduly sharp lines of demarcation, but it serves the purpose of showing that the main points of differences between Gentile and primitive<sup>1</sup> Christianity are concerned with the development that made the Christ the centre of the worship of the community and thus necessitated the growth of a high Christology and the transmutation of the rite of Baptism and the Last Supper into sacraments with the same soteriological importance as attached to the heathen mysteries.

But these points were not yet the storm-centres of controversy in the early days of the Antiochene mission, and before discussing Christology and sacraments it is necessary to spend a little time on considering the course of the development of the history, and the nature rather than the details of the disputes<sup>2</sup> which were central in the days of St. Paul's missionary work.

Although it is convenient, and not inaccurate, to describe the several stages just sketched as first, second, and third, it is of course obvious that

<sup>1</sup> Using "primitive" to mean the Christianity of the life of Jesus and of the disciples in Jerusalem before the rise of Hellenistic Christianity at Antioch.

<sup>2</sup> The details are often lost beyond hope of recovery, and to discuss them here would unnecessarily obscure an already sufficiently complicated question by the introduction of many technical and critical problems.

the end of one was not coincident with the beginning of its successor. We know very little about the Christians—if we may use the phrase—who after the crucifixion perpetuated the public teaching of Jesus without change, but on general principles we may fairly assume that they must have existed, even if not for many years. Such disciples would continue the teaching of Jesus, but would not regard him as the Messiah, unless they came into contact with some of the inner circle who knew the secret. We cannot suppose that all the many original disciples of Jesus went up with him to Jerusalem, or, if they did so, returned there after the crucifixion. But it is also improbable that they all stayed permanently in Galilee; some at least may have emigrated to the great towns of the empire. It is not impossible—I think it is probable—that this is the true explanation of the curious stories of the disciples in Ephesus who seem to have been ignorant of the gift of the Spirit until the coming of St. Paul, and of Apollos who knew about Jesus,<sup>1</sup> but “only the baptism of John,” and apparently did not preach that Jesus was the Messiah until he had been instructed by Aquila and Priscilla. Their

<sup>1</sup> In the *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* I adopted a different explanation of this difficult passage, but I think that I was wrong.

conversion by St. Paul and Aquila is no doubt typical of the fate of the disciples of the first period who had emigrated to the cities of the empire. They were absorbed by one or other of the chief Christian missions, and for this reason the survival of the first stage of Christianity has left very few marks on Christian tradition. Probably, too, the majority of such disciples remained in Galilee and were, to use a modern phrase, in communion with the Jewish Church, attending the worship of the synagogues in Galilee, thinking of the days of that strange "Revival" when they listened to the preaching of Jesus, and hoping that if they followed his teaching and suffered to the end they would win their lives in the kingdom of which he had foretold the advent. St. Luke was probably wrong in fact when he omitted the mention of such followers, and made Jerusalem the sole centre of Christianity after the crucifixion, but the value-judgment which his treatment implies was correct, for this type of disciple soon ceased to exist, and had no permanent influence on the development of the Church.

The relations subsisting between the second and third and between the third and fourth stages, or in other words between the Antiochene mission—which for us means St. Paul—and on the one hand

the Jerusalem mission, and on the other nascent Gentile Christianity, is much more important and complicated. It is above all necessary to emphasise that the epistles give no countenance to the view, prevalent in the nineteenth century, which depicts them as representing the controversy as a simple struggle between Judaism or Judaizing Christians and St. Paul. In his own writings St. Paul appears as standing between two extremes: on one side of him the Jerusalem "Judaizers" argued that Christianity was the child of Judaism, and that the law was essentially binding on converts, and on the other "Hellenizing" converts sought to read into the teaching of the Antiochene mission doctrines more in agreement with their own desires than with the pronouncements of St. Paul. Even though some leaders of the latter movement may have been Jews by birth, they were not so in spirit; they had given up the Law, and in the reaction had become more Greek than the Greeks. They argued for entire freedom; Christianity was a religion of freedom and of the Spirit, and it must know nothing of restrictions which would check the most complete liberty of conduct. "All things are lawful" was their party cry, and it is this type of Christianity which is controverted in the Epistles to the Corinthians.

It is thus as standing in the middle between "Judaizer" and "Hellenizer" that St. Paul appears, and this probably represents the true position of the Antiochene mission as a whole.

As against the Judaizers he argued that righteousness—the antithesis to sin—which would admit men to the kingdom of God and was the basis of salvation from the wrath to come was dependent on faith,<sup>1</sup> not on the works of the law.

As against the other—the Hellenizing—party he argued that even if it were true that "all things were lawful" the ethical and moral requirements of Christianity were binding. The highest ethical system<sup>2</sup> in all its strength was emphasised as the necessary obligation, though not as the previous condition of membership in the Christian community.

To attempt to follow the details of the triangular controversy thus revealed by the Epistles is scarcely

<sup>1</sup> To some Protestant writers there is an inconsistency between this emphasis on faith and the sacramental view of baptism; but no Catholic ever felt this antithesis, and in this respect Catholicism is primitive. Faith, not the works of the law, was regarded as a necessary condition of obtaining righteousness, but baptism was the means.

<sup>2</sup> To ask whether these ethics were those of the Synagogue or of the Stoa is somewhat useless; at the best, Synagogue and Stoa approached very nearly to one another, and it is not important—for the present purpose—to inquire into their relative obligations to one another.



desirable. Many reconstructions have been made; none are wholly satisfactory, because we have really not more than a series of glimpses at the facts. Luke, who might have told us, preferred to be silent; and it is impossible fully to connect all the fragments of evidence in the Epistles, except by an unjustifiable use of the imagination. But we may profitably ask what was the main difference between the two sets of opponents whom St. Paul had to face? It was two-fold: intellectual and psychological.

The Greek and the Jew were divided from one another by education and general intellectual attitude, and this affected the form in which they looked at the promise of "salvation" made them by religion. Both desired it, but they formed different pictures of the benefits conferred by it.

The Jew expected primarily security from the impending wrath of God, and that he would belong to the kingdom of God, when it should come. That was the object of his hopes and his prayers; and it was the assurance of that which he believed that he found in his religion.

The Greek, on the other hand, meant that he wished to feel safe in his personal life, not only safe now, but safe after death; to him the main thing was the assurance that he had obtained a

personal salvation which not only gave him release from the troubles and sins of this present world, but also would conduct him after his death to what we, in ordinary language, should call heaven. That was the point of view of the Greeks at Corinth, and if we read I Cor. xv. we see that St. Paul was standing between the Jew who believed in the coming resurrection as the only way in which the dead can share in the kingdom, and the Greek who asked what was the purpose, if he had already obtained eternal life, of talking about a resurrection. He had—so he argued—eternal life already, and when he died he would merely pass to a higher state.

St. Paul seems to have appreciated the Greeks' point of view, and to understand the objection that they felt to a resurrection of flesh and blood, but he was, after all, a Jew, and the belief in a resurrection was an essential part of his eschatology. For a time he seems to have succeeded in maintaining a doctrine of a resurrection which was not of flesh and blood, but in the end the Catholic Church came to a different conclusion. This, however, is so important a part of the following stage of the development of Christian thought that it will be more suitably discussed as a whole in a later chapter; it is at present sufficient to em-

phasize that the divergence between Greek and Jew was due to varying intellectual standpoints producing a corresponding difference in the form given to the anticipation of a future life.

Besides this intellectual and educational difference between the Jew and the Greek<sup>1</sup> there was also a psychological difference. Both looked for help from their religions, but they wished for differing forms of help.

The Jew desired an answer to the question: "What am I to do?" He required a code of life and of action; he would have thoroughly agreed with Matthew Arnold that conduct was three parts of life; in fact he probably thought that it was the whole of it; and he wanted to know how he was to act. He felt that his own action was often wrong; that, left to himself, he was constantly making mistakes; and that he needed guidance and support. Therefore it was in no mean or unworthy spirit that he required a religion giving him a law to tell him definitely what to do.

It is interesting, in looking over the whole stretch of Christian history, to see how the necessity of meeting the needs of this type of nature was

<sup>1</sup> Jewish and Greek are, of course, only roughly true designations: the distinction is really psychological, and there were many "psychological Jews" of Greek nationality, and "psychological Greeks" of Jewish blood.

found too strong for any preconceived ideas of the early Christians. Even when they thought that they were most definitely abandoning the idea of a law, events were steadily leading them back to the fact that they could not in the end neglect the requirements of the Jewish type, because the man who requires his religion to tell him what to do is not to be found among Jews alone. He belongs to a psychological type which embraces more than half mankind, and therefore in the end, in spite of the breach with Judaism, all churches have been forced to produce codes of conduct—those codes, partly written, partly unwritten, which we describe as Christian morals, Christian ethics, or Christian conduct; and some churches, and still more some individual Christians, have gone so far in the process of defining exactly what a Christian may do and may not do, that as a matter of principle there is not any serious difference between their position and that of legalistic Judaism. That it should be so was psychologically inevitable.

On the other hand, the Greek did not ask, "What am I to do?" but, "What am I to be?" He wished to become—not to do—something different. He did not feel so acutely that what he did was wrong or unsatisfactory, or even if he did

so it did not disturb him very much. What distressed him was the feeling that his very being was corrupt, and that there was something radically perverted about his whole existence. He said in effect that he wanted a religion to help him to become a new being and to change his nature and, speaking in the language of the heathen mysteries referred to in the preceding chapter, he expressed the longing to be "born again." To be "born again" was the technical phrase for initiation in the heathen mysteries, but it was much more than a reference to mere ceremonial; it rather represented a type of real psychical experience.

What is really important is that these Greek converts were convinced that by their religion they did truly become something different. It is one of the facts which we have to take as beyond dispute that the Greek who was converted to Christianity by St. Paul did believe that he actually had obtained a changed nature. We may criticise or reject any particular explanation of the fact, and we may even deny, if we see fit, that the Greek was right in his belief; but we cannot dispute the fact that the belief itself was unwavering.

There was thus a real basis of religious experience to the Greek position, but it often was

accompanied by a certain moral laxity, just as the Jewish position was accompanied by a certain spiritual hardness. It is not surprising that neither Jew nor Greek understood or valued each other's position; and St. Paul's arguments are only to be appreciated when we perceive that he is constantly standing between the two. Psychologically, he was more Greek than Jew; he had himself known the desire for rebirth, and felt that it was this which was central in his own religion, so that he protested indignantly against the Jew who wished to subject all men to the bondage of the law, and viewed religion primarily as a guide to conduct. But by birth he was a Jew; he knew the value of morality and its permanent union—as distinct from confusion—with religion, and he protested with equal indignation against the Greek who combined spiritual experience with lax moral conduct and did not feel the distinction between freedom from bondage and licence to immorality.

Up to a point his efforts were successful. But the conflict was not finished. "Greek" and "Jew" stand not so much for national as for psychological differences,<sup>1</sup> and Christianity has

<sup>1</sup> It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that every one belongs to one type or the other. Most of us in practice belong

been successful in providing a world-religion only so far as it has produced a system capable of meeting the demands both of "Jews" who wish to know what they should do, and of "Greeks" who seek for a rebirth to a better life. Much, however, of the unending friction in Christian life has been due to the insistence of those who belong to one type on their supposed right to legislate for those belonging to the other, and to their continual illusion that all good Christians ought to have the same kind of experience. Especially is it true that the man of the Greek type who has wished to obtain a new nature, and has felt the assurance that he has obtained it, has always considered there must be something wrong with the man who feels neither that desire nor that assurance, but nevertheless thinks that he, in his own way, has received from his religion what he wanted, and, to use the old phrase, that he also is a child of God, though perhaps by birth rather than by rebirth. All through Christian history there has been an unintelligent friction between these two types, and it would be one of the greatest

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to a mixed type. But unfortunately in writing it is not possible to do more than deal with strongly marked characteristics, and, as a matter of fact, it is probably true that the great heroes of religions have as a rule been pure examples of one or the other type.

blessings if the study of scientific psychology,<sup>1</sup> for that is what is really needed, could lead religious men to realize that we are not all made alike; that neither our needs nor our experiences are always the same as those of our neighbours, but that theirs are not, for that reason, less real or less valid than our own.

It is remarkable that the controversy between Paul and the Judaizers should not have touched the questions of Christology or Baptism; the fact seems to be that on these subjects controversy arose somewhat later, and that the Antiochene mission was much more Jewish in its theological conceptions than some of the converted God-fearers who helped to form the next generation. With regard both to Christology and Baptism the situation was probably saved by the fact that in the one case language, and in the other custom, was in so far ambiguous that Jews and Gentile God-fearers were able to adopt the same usage, though with differing interpretations.

This is especially clear with regard to Christology; the Christians of Jerusalem and Antioch agreed in saying that Jesus was the Christ—the

<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely necessary to refer to the epoch-making work of W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, but, well known though the book is, its practical application has rarely been attempted.



Messiah. But that is by no means the simple statement which it seems; it implies the whole Jewish apparatus of thought as to the kingdom of God, and the Messiah who was to reign in it. It was a natural and intelligible statement to people who accepted the Jewish position. But it was really meaningless to the Greek world, and Christ (Messiah) rapidly became a proper name—as it has remained ever since, for all except theologians. The word which the Greeks preferred to use was “Lord” (κύριος), and this was the means of opening the way for a development of thought, without causing an open rupture with the original Jewish stock.

To a Greek a “Lord” in the theological sense was divine. The phrase was used of the emperors, and was especially common in connection with the “redeeming Gods” of the Oriental cults. At the same time in a non-theological sense, and especially in the vocative, it was a mere title of respect.<sup>1</sup>

The result was that the use of “Lord” was a long step towards the claim of divinity for Jesus, and was doubtless very soon so interpreted by Greeks and God-fearing converts, but it was not a direct infringement on the monotheism of the Jew, such

<sup>1</sup> In which sense it survives now in modern Greek as the ordinary equivalent of “Mr.” or, in the vocative, “Sir.”

as would have been the attribution to Jesus of the title of God. Thus St. Paul freely calls Jesus "Lord," and even regards the use of this title as the distinctive mark of a good spirit in a prophet, but he never calls Jesus "God," and distinguishes<sup>1</sup> between Heathen, who have "Gods many and Lords many," and Christians, who have "one God—the Father—and one Lord—Jesus Christ."

It is extremely probable that if a Jew had been asked whether this infringed on monotheism he would have said "No," after a little hesitation; while, if a Greek had been asked whether it conceded the divinity of Jesus, he would have said "Yes"—also after a little hesitation. The fact, of course, is that the Jew and the Greek had radically different ideas of God. To the Greek the ascription of divinity to the Emperor was rational, and not really inconsistent with philosophic monotheism; he believed in one God, who was manifested as many gods. Deism was repugnant to his system of thought, but a kind of monistic Pantheism he could tolerate, and while intellectually convinced that God is One he was prepared to worship God in many manifestations, as "all in all." To the Jew, on the other hand, monotheism meant the affirmation that there is One God, which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii., 5 *f.*

is not quite the same thing as that God is One. He was trembling on the verge of Deism, and often passed right over to completely Deistic thought. The angels, and the Messiah, might be supernatural beings, belonging to the heavenly world, but they were not God, even though God might have appointed them as Lords. They might be the sons of God, but the son is not the same as his father—there is but one God, who has said: “Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” Thus the point which the Jew emphasized was the majesty and uniqueness of God, while the Greek laid stress on the comprehensiveness of God—the fact that he must be looked upon as all-embracing, and “all in all.” In this respect the “Lord” terminology of the Antiochene mission as revealed by the Epistles and Acts, was admirably fitted to serve as a common language for both parties.

It was possible for a Christian of the Antiochene mission, who dissented from Jerusalem in that he desired to see the way of life made open to the Gentiles without their sharing in the responsibilities of the law, which was the special privilege of Israel, to believe sincerely that he was representing the meaning of the word “Messiah”—to Greek ears so unintelligible—by saying that Jesus was the Lord. But to a convert from the Gentile world

the word brought with it all the connotations of heathen theological language. To him it meant the recognition of Jesus as the supernatural centre of a cult. This cult indeed, was essentially religious rather than theological, and spiritual rather than intellectual. It was inspired by a consciousness of a common experience of new life, which was the dividing line between it and the rest of the world; its members had gained the gift of the Spirit, and henceforth this Spirit was the directing power in their lives. In the language of their day they expressed this by saying that the Spirit was the Lord, and they were his slaves, but the Lord they also identified with Jesus Christ, more or less ignoring the linguistic facts, and regarding "Jesus Christ" as a compound proper name. For such Christians the centre of their community life was in the present, not as in the case of the original Palestinian Christians in the future; Jesus was not merely the future king of the kingdom of heaven which was yet to come, he was the spiritual being who was the centre of an already existing community, in which he was ruling as Lord, and he was looked up to as the source of salvation both in this world and in the world to come. The original eschatological view survived, but was sinking into the background; the community of

the Lord, the Church, is not yet formally identified with the Kingdom of God, but it is not clearly distinguished from it. How far St. Paul himself moved along this line of development is a doubtful question, because we cannot be sure that the present form of the later epistles is really from his hand. If it be, he had gone a long way; if not, some of his followers had done so. The matter is important for the history of St. Paul, but less so for the history of Christianity. What is clear is that before long the Christology of the Gentile Christians definitely included the recognition of Jesus as the supernatural spiritual head of the community. On the part of the Antiochene mission and its converts the way was made ready for this development by the use of language which could lead up to this result (especially the use of the word "lord"),<sup>1</sup> and by the existence among the God-fearers of a theological atmosphere, derived from the Oriental mystery religions, which

<sup>1</sup> The use of the phrase *Maran atha* (1 Cor.) seems to show that it was used in Aramaic-speaking circles before it was translated into Greek. Bousset seems to me somewhat to underestimate the importance of this fact; but his *Kyrios Christos* and his article in the *ZNW* for May, 1914, make it probable that *Kyrios* is not the use of Jerusalem. Probably it comes from Semitic-speaking—not necessarily Jewish—or bilingual circles in Antioch, but there is also perhaps more to be said as to the influence of the LXX and its use of *κύριος*—usually not *ὁ κύριος*—as the translation of *Adonai* = *Jahveh*.

tended to make them look for a Redeemer-Lord such as was the centre of almost every mystery religion.

But obviously the development of thought could not stay here. Further attempts were inevitable to explain the position of the Lord, as the centre of the religious life of the community, in more philosophic forms of theology. The Epistles to the Colossians and to the Hebrews show clearly the tendency to make use of current philosophical language, and this culminates in the prologue to the fourth gospel in the use of the word *Logos*, which had already been rendered familiar by philosophers as the designation of God—absolute reality—revealed in Utterance and in Reason. To such philosophers the Divine *Logos*—the Word or Reason of God—appeared as the agent of creation and the sustaining power in the universe, whom men approached in religion not entirely as strangers but because in some paradoxical manner the *Logos* was already in them, so that in proportion as they came to him they came also to their own true selves.

But the *Logos* was not only identified with the agent of creation and the object and source of religious life; an attempt was also made to identify him with the gods of ancient cults, and explain

the stories of mythology as illustrations of his operations in the world. The Logos was especially identified with Hermes, as is shown not only by the Hermetic literature but also in the *Theologia Hellenica* of Cornutus<sup>1</sup>; but there was a strong tendency to find him in all the stories of gods who had worked in the world. It was inevitable that Christians should follow the same line of thought, and the fourth gospel represents the complete identification of the Lord of the Church with the Logos, and the recognition of Jesus as the incarnation of the Logos. The primitive history of the Prophet of Galilee, who announced the coming of the kingdom, believed that he would reign as the Messiah when the kingdom came, and called men to repent that they too might share in the kingdom, was rewritten as the story of the manifestation in word and deed of the eternal Logos, by whom the universe had been made and sustained, who had been constantly in the world in his servants, and had come in these last days to offer to mankind a share in his own eternal life, beyond the changes of this transitory world.

<sup>1</sup> In its present form the Hermetic literature is not earlier than the second century, though it probably represents a much older tradition, but Cornutus certainly belongs to the early first century, unless his identification with the tutor of Persius can be overthrown.

## 116      The Stewardship of Faith

The development of thought and practice with regard to Baptism and the commemoration of the Last Supper was probably similar to that of Christology. It was the acceptance by God-fearers of originally Jewish rites with an eschatological meaning as though they possessed the significance of mysteries or sacraments.

The details, however, are very obscure. With regard to Baptism the facts which emerge most clearly are these. The baptism of John was primarily eschatological in significance; it was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Even here there is difficulty: a baptism which effected the remission of sins—and the words can scarcely mean anything else—is unknown in Jewish literature before this time, except for a possible allusion in the Sibylline oracles. It is, however, legitimate to regard the baptism of John as an extension of the principle involved in the washing away of ceremonial impurity, since the Essenes seem to have been moving in the same direction. What is clear is the eschatological significance; men were baptized in order to escape the wrath to come, and they were primarily concerned with their relationship to the future kingdom. There was no suggestion that their nature would be changed—though this may be implied



in the Greek word for repentance it is not Jewish—but rather that they were being prepared for a change of society by the removal of, as it were, the excrescences of sin, and the acceptance of a new type of conduct. It is ethical and eschatological, but not in the Greek sense a sacramental mystery. So much is tolerably clear. The same may be said of the other end of the development, which was certainly reached by the fourth gospel and probably by St. Paul's Gentile converts. In the Epistles baptism is baptism in the name of Christ; it effects a union with his death and risen life; it is the putting on of Christ.<sup>1</sup> We are already little removed from the conception of "regeneration" which is characteristic of the mystery religion, is clearly expounded in the conversation of Nicodemus with Jesus in the fourth gospel, and is an essential part of the intellectual apparatus of Catholic Christianity.

The difference between these two extremes is great, but just as the word "Lord" was a point of union between the Jewish missionaries of the Antiochene school and their converts from "God-fearing" circles, though they did not really attach

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. vi. and Gal. iii. See also Heitmüller's *Im Namen Jesu* and the article on "Early Christian Baptism," in Hastings's *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*.

the same connotations to the word, so the rite of baptism was also a point of contact, though it was interpreted differently.<sup>1</sup>

If we try to trace the line of the development from the baptism of John to sacramental baptism in the name of Christ, it proves impossible to attain clearly defined results. The unbroken silence of the synoptic narrative goes to show that Jesus recognized no baptism except that of John, for the famous passage in Matt. xxviii., 19, with the Trinitarian formula cannot be regarded as historical or even very early.<sup>2</sup> This conclusion is supported by the existence of Christians in Ephesus who had only been baptized with the baptism of John.<sup>3</sup> As suggested above (p. 97 f.), these Christians, like Apollos, probably represent the survival of those who had been followers of

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, however, seems to have been far more "Greek" in connection with baptism than he was with Christology.

<sup>2</sup> It may even be a textual interpolation. Eusebius and possibly some earlier writers seem to have had a text which read: "Go and make disciples in my name, teaching them to observe all things, etc.," omitting all mention of baptism. But in any case the evidence of Acts and Epistles shows that the Trinitarian formula is not the earliest form of Christian baptism, and it is incredible that this should be so if Jesus had directly enjoined it.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix., 1-7. The whole story gives the impression that the relationship of Jesus to John the Baptist, and their respective disciples, was closer than is stated. Those acquainted with the history of Persia, and with the writings of Prof. Browne, will be reminded of the relationship between the Bab and Beha.

Jesus in Galilee, but had not gone up to Jerusalem, or heard the Messianic secret.

At what point did the Christians begin to baptize in the name of Jesus Christ? According to Acts, immediately after the Ascension. But this is just one of the places where we have reason to ask whether the writer has not projected some of the customs of his own Hellenistic Christianity into the picture of the Church at Jerusalem. In the absence of evidence we cannot decide. It is remarkable that in the speech of St. Peter in Acts iii., which Harnack regards as a doublet of the speech in Acts ii., baptism is not mentioned, but repentance alone is required, as in the original message of Jesus in Mark i., "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent!" Especially is this important when it is observed that of all the early chapters in Acts the third is that which most certainly goes back to a separate (Greek?) source, because it has peculiarities of diction which are not found elsewhere in the book.

Similarly with regard to the Last Supper the two ends of the development are much plainer than its course. The account of "the institution of the Eucharist" in Mark may perhaps be regarded as an "institution," though it seems more probably to have been a sign of the shortness of

the time which was to elapse before the coming of the kingdom, but it was scarcely a "Eucharist" in the later sense. The point of the words seems to be that the breaking of the bread and the out-pouring of the wine at the supper were symbols of the approaching suffering<sup>1</sup> of Jesus whom God would now so soon glorify in the kingdom which was at hand. The background of thought is eschatological and the sacramental conceptions of Catholic Christianity are absent.

On the other hand, the fourth gospel is absolutely Catholic in the explanation of the Eucharist given in John vi., and even if 1 Cor. x. does not prove that St. Paul regarded the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal, it at least shows that his Greek converts took this view. It is very significant that he regards this side of the matter as common ground between himself and the Corinthians, but thinks that it is necessary to remind them of its eschatological significance, "Ye do show the Lord's death, *till he come.*"

To trace the details of the development is impossible, and we may be sure that the writers of the Gospels and of the Acts do not exaggerate

<sup>1</sup> Possibly of his death, but see p. 46 f. In any case the repetition of the rite was definitely connected with his death. Cf. 1 Cor. xi.

the difference between the first and the last stage. But it is clear that, granted the custom of a meal in connection with the religious life of the community, bound up in the mind of those who took part in it with the death of Jesus, with the coming of the kingdom and his manifestation as Messiah, and with the foreshadowing of the Messianic feast, together with the tradition that the Lord had instituted this custom, converts from the ranks of Greek God-fearers, who had accepted the "Lord" as a Redeeming God, would inevitably interpret this meal in the manner in which they were accustomed to regard the religious meals associated with the mysteries of other Redeeming Gods.

It is obvious that we have in this development of Christological and sacramental thought the recognizable beginnings of Catholic Christianity. Moreover, the Church, without ceasing to preach and partially to practise the world-renouncing ethics of Jesus, began more and more consciously to seek a synthesis with the world-accepting ethics of the Empire. It became a society of those who not only hope for a new age but also accept the present age and the responsibility of taking part in its development. The Greek point

of view, with its worship of the Lord and its sacraments, became dominant, though the Jewish element never wholly died out; it was now necessary for the Church seriously to measure its strength against its rivals and opponents. Some of the consequences of this process and its permanent value must be discussed in the three next chapters.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHURCH AND HEATHENISM

Introduction—Plutarch and Justin—Intellectual Dishonesty—  
Ethical Attitude of Heathenism—The Catholic Attitude—  
Social Waste-products—The Sacramental Ministry—The  
Catholic Position—The Protestant Position—The Sacra-  
mental View of Life—The Need of the Present.

THE general outlines of the Catholic Christianity, which resulted from the process described in the last chapter, are well known, whether it be regarded as an institution or as a system of theology. As an institution it was a sacramental ministry; as a theology it was the application of philosophy to the development of the propositions that the Lord is Jesus and the Lord is the Logos.

It is not my purpose to enter upon the details concerned with the relation of Catholic Christianity to contemporary thought; but rather to point out how far it was modified by controversy with rival systems, to emphasize the permanent elements of truth which it so triumphantly expressed,

though in its own way and under the conditions of these controversies, and to show how it left a legacy of thought and practice which every system of theology must remember if it seeks to do for its own generation what Catholic Christianity did for at least a thousand years to supply an intellectually adequate system of thought and create a spiritually satisfying corporate organization for the expression of the common experience of religion.

It must never be forgotten that the main purpose of Christian theologians during this period was to obtain intellectual correctness, a thing which is never completely to be obtained, and is only approached by the method of controversy. In intellectual life we are always engaged in dispute, because in the attempt to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge and logical thought our efforts are always a mixture of failure and success. The appeal for judgment is to our peers, and each man who has any claim to be an original worker is in turn judge and judged. Or to change the metaphor, progress is obtained, as it were, by a process of friction. One man's thoughts are rubbed up against his rivals' until the excrescences are removed, and we obtain something which is not the same as the original propositions, but is better than either. The necessary condition for intellectual



improvement in any society is the permission to discuss and the recognition of the principle that the less cannot judge the greater. The intellectual sterility of a great part of modern Christianity is largely because free discussion has been rendered impossible by the system of settling theological disputes by discipline instead of argument, by an appeal to past opinion instead of to logic or evidence, and by the authority of ecclesiastical officers whose devotion to their own duties has rendered it impossible for them to be in the forefront of scholarship, so that they are often disposed to ignore or misunderstand problems which students have raised.

But it was eminently possible in the days of the early Church, and the three opponents attacked by the theological leaders of the day were Heathenism, Gnosticism, and what, for want of a better name, may be called Uninstructed Christianity. In none of these three disputes can we fairly say that the whole truth was on the side of the Christian theologian. But he was right on the case as it was then presented by his immediate opponent; and if we study history with a view to understanding its meaning rather than cataloguing its facts, the important thing is to see why this was so in each case. It will, moreover, be found

to be roughly true that the development of the sacramental ministry is more closely connected with the struggle against Heathenism, the form of the belief in God and the hope of a future life with the struggle against Gnosticism, and the development of Christology with the struggle against Uninstructed Christianity.

In the controversy with Heathenism there is nothing which so shocks the student as the discovery that again and again he is bound to admit that the arguments of the Christian Apologists, who were attacking Heathenism, often seem to be wanting equally in justice and in logic. If we compare the apology of Justin Martyr with, for instance, Plutarch's book on Isis and Osiris, we are struck by the fact that the Heathenism which Justin attacks is a thing of straw which he sets up in order to knock down, and that in some ways Plutarch stands a great deal nearer to Justin than he does to the caricature of Heathenism which Justin attacks. Justin repeats again and again all the arguments used by the Stoic philosophers against the myths of Greek and Oriental theology; Plutarch would probably have replied that he fully agreed with the greater part of the Stoic arguments, but that the whole complex of nar-

ratives were one long allegory showing the working of God and of the divine Logos in the world. If you leave out the heathen mythology on the one hand and the Old Testament history and the presentation of the life of Jesus on the other, there is very little difference between Plutarch and Justin. Both regard the whole history of the world as due to the working of the divine Logos, both regard the chief end of man as his union with the Logos, and both regard religion as the means whereby this union may be accomplished.

Plutarch was a cultivated, able man, spiritual and reverent: he had all the prestige of historic continuity, social recognition, and ancestral tradition on his side. The Christian Apologists were fighting against all these advantages and their main weapon of offence, the prophetic interpretation of the Old Testament, would not today find any defender among the leaders of the study of this subject. Justin argues that every event in the life of Jesus is the fulfilment of some verse in the Old Testament, and his powers of distorted exegesis are almost incredible. Moreover, he maintains that the demons, who masqueraded as gods in Heathenism, knew these prophecies, and produced false fulfilments in order to deceive people. Thus not only the birth of Jesus, but

also that of Perseus, was a fulfilment of prophecy—the one the true fulfilment, the other the fraudulent fulfilment by demons. The only thing which the demons had not realized was the meaning of the prophecies of the crucifixion, and that was the cause of their undoing.<sup>1</sup>

Why did this kind of argument succeed as against Plutarch? One answer would be that it did not really succeed. So long as the educated serious heathen of Plutarch's type remained, so long did the Christian Apologists make little headway. The universal spread of Christianity came when the decay of the Empire brought about the disappearance of the intellectual heathen, or as a preliminary to their disappearance their entire retirement into private life. According to this view Christianity conquered the Empire because the educated classes despaired of dealing with the proletariat and gave up the struggle.

There is an element of truth in this answer, as can be seen by reading Dr. Dill's *Roman Society in the Fourth Century*. It is probably true that the Apologists made very little impression on the

<sup>1</sup> This view, that the redemptive work of the Cross was brought about by deceiving the demons, who allowed Jesus to enter their realms in ignorance of his triumph, is often found in early Christian literature: cf., for instance, the *Descensus ad Inferos* in the *Acta Pilati*.

better educated classes, and these rather died out than were converted; but it is a mistaken view if it be intended to show that the Christians were wrong and the heathen right. The whole truth was not on either side, but the balance of "right-mindedness," rather than of correctness of thought, was on the Christian side.

The defect of Heathenism was twofold: it was intellectually not quite honest, for it subordinated exact truth to the interests of an institution, and it had a perverted view of the world-accepting ethics which it ought to have taken over from the best thought of the early Empire.

Plutarch and those like him were the victims of a kind of intellectual self-deception which would amount to dishonesty if it were not unconscious. They did not really believe the mythology which formed the basis of popular Heathenism—they were too well educated, and too intelligent. But they feared the breach in the continuity of tradition which would be suffered if they admitted its falsity. Therefore they said, "It is true—symbolically." A meaning was found for everything, even the most obscene details and the most foolish trifles. Thus they could not really escape the attacks either of merely destructive philosophers, or of the Christians. The mytho-

logy dragged them down with it, because they could not see that it had become the distortion instead of the expression of religion. It is true that many of the Old Testament stories are as mythological as those which Plutarch related: but the difference was that the Christians absolutely believed them. Sincere belief in a mistaken creed does not always detract from a preacher's message; but the public ear is never kept by any one who has constantly to stop in order to explain that what he is saying is only symbolically true, when the language in which it is expressed was clearly intended literally by those who first made use of it. The public cannot always express its meaning clearly, but what it feels is that the symbolism is not part of the original message: that it is not extracted from the story, but put into it, and that the same ingenuity could equally well find any lesson anywhere. When a "sacred history"—which is what Plutarch's mythology was—has come to mean everything which the preacher wishes, it has also come to mean nothing, and his audience leaves him in the end for those who say so.

Plutarch for all his truly spiritual and beautiful nature was looking to the past for the centre of his religion. The Christians, in spite of the un-

couthness of much of their thought, found their real inspiration in the present, and were living for the future. And yet, even when we see clearly that these educated heathen were wrong in their attitude, both to the necessities of their less fortunate neighbours, and to the intellectual necessity for abandoning a mythology which they did not believe to be true, and did not regard as really essential to their religion—even then we leave Plutarch with a sigh. He saw the value of historic continuity, he wished to keep the inherited organization, and recognized its enormous power. He tried to do what Erasmus tried to accomplish in the days of the Reformation. Both of them failed, and their failure meant a real loss, because the cause of progress proved in the end to have passed to the keeping of those who were in many ways greatly inferior in breadth of outlook and in general cultivation.

Probably even more important than this defect in Heathenism was its ethical attitude. The Empire had developed a system of world-accepting ethics, but in practice this had been degraded by treating the preservation of institutions as a substitute for the service of society, and by a constant confusion between the maintenance of privilege and the discharge of responsibility. It

is true that world-accepting ethics came from the Empire rather than the Church; but it was the Church which proved best to understand them so that in the end they came to be known as Christian ethics. Moreover at its best the Church never overlooked the world-renouncing ethics of Jesus: the expectation of the immediate coming of the kingdom died away, but the truths which it had rendered visible were never wholly forgotten. Catholic teaching—always and necessarily in advance of Catholic practice—combined complementary truths without confusing them, and produced generations of men and women who proved their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven by the faithful service of the society of mankind.

In this connection the real weakness of Heathenism and the real strength of Christianity are indicated by the famous sneer of Celsus<sup>1</sup> that Christians appealed to the outcasts whom intelligent sects excluded. For in reality the Christian method was politically—using the word in its proper sense—correct. The proletariat in the Roman Empire like its modern analogue, was a waste product of the social machine. The men

<sup>1</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3, 59. There is an admirable summary of Celsus' arguments in T. R. Glover's *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*.



of the type of Celsus and the cults to which he alludes were engaged in raising a barrier of "respectability" between themselves and the less desirable classes, by increasing and extending to religious life the wall of privileges separating them. The uselessness of the waste products was accentuated. The Christians on the other hand accepted the social outcast and endeavoured to raise his general moral and religious standard. They lessened the uselessness of the waste products, and even succeeded in finding for them an effective employment.

The failure of Heathenism, then, was because it falsely interpreted the practical working out of the world-accepting ethic which was peculiarly its own message, while the Church really carried it into effect. It did so no doubt unconsciously, and here again the abiding influence of the eschatological expectation and of world-renunciation can be traced. The Church called on the sinner and social outcast to turn and amend his life, to live soberly and honestly; it taught him right conduct and pure thought. It did so in order to prepare him for a New Age, which the angels of the Lord would suddenly bring; but in fact it produced a "new race" which possessed the necessary virtues of good citizens, but were un-

attached to the clogged machinery of the Empire. Therefore, when the crash came and barbarian armies rather than angelic hosts heralded a New Age, it was the Christians, not the more cultivated heathen, who were able to survive.

It is worth noting how closely these facts bear on modern life, and how seriously they ought to affect the thoughts of the leaders of Christian churches. In the Roman Empire the accumulation of waste products became so great that the machinery became clogged, and civilization—which is rapid movement, not a stationary condition—broke down.<sup>1</sup> We now know the commercial value of finding uses for waste products, and are well aware that a business in which the proportion of waste products is constantly increasing is doomed to bankruptcy. Yet if we look at the world as a whole, we find that there is practically only one business in which the percentage of waste product is increasing instead of diminishing, and that is the factory of human lives. The real tragedy of modern life is that whereas social improvements are increasing the average length of actual existence, economic methods are shortening the period of efficient existence. That is to

<sup>1</sup> The barbarians did not come because they were strong, but because the Empire had become weak.

say, a man who does not happen to have the advantage of belonging to the class of brain workers has now the right to expect that he will live longer than his grandfather did, but he has also the unpleasant certainty that he will not be able to go on working productively so long as his grandfather did. In other words, there is in his existence a longer period of life which, socially speaking, is a waste product.

Ultimately, if the process be continued, this must bring the social machinery to the scrap-heap, and only those parts of our "triumphant civilization" will survive which have shown some capacity for dealing with waste products. Would this again be the Christian Church?

The sacramental ministry of the Catholic Church is the positive side of this mission of Christianity to the "waste products" and failures of life. Those who are whole need no physician, but, not only among the "waste products" in the economic sense, there are always many who are spiritually failures, and need help. To define the relationship, in terms of cause and effect, between the nervous system and the psychical condition of those whom William James calls "sick souls" is difficult; but the two things are intimately connected. There is always a large class of

people who are suffering from the consciousness of spiritual evil in themselves, with which they are fighting a losing battle, and this consciousness breaks down their nervous strength; just as on the other hand there are those whose nervous system is weakened by strain or overwork, and betrays them into moral and spiritual failure. Such men need physicians and treatment. That is exactly what the sacramental ministry sought to provide.

Why are men miserable? asked the Church, and answered the question by saying that it was because of sin. It did not analyse closely the concept of sin, but it offered release from it by baptism. The original position was that baptism alone was the cure for sin; it was in itself sufficient for the needs of the believer. Experience, however, showed the difficulty of this position; it became more and more clear that Christians were not immune from the attacks of sin, and if sinlessness were really required from them as a condition of salvation few indeed would be saved. Sin after baptism thus became a practical problem; a second baptism, suggested by some, was regarded as impossible, but nevertheless analogous rites—in so far as they were looked upon as sacraments—were established. Penitence (or

Penance, to use the more customary word) and the Mass came to be used as the sacramental means whereby Christians could be cleansed from the stains of post-baptismal sin, and the ministry of the Church developed into a great system for their administration, in order to heal and comfort souls stricken with sin and calling for the care of a physician.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to ignore the fact that there is in modern Christianity the widest variation of opinion as to the value of this development. The Catholic regards the sacramental ministry as the thing which he prizes above everything; the Protestant as a miserable perversion of the truth and the recrudescence of heathen practices. There is, I believe, nothing more important than the correct understanding of the way in which both of the positions are based upon an imperfect appreciation, rather than on a complete misunderstanding of the facts.

The Catholic position is that believers<sup>2</sup> obtain grace through the outward forms of the Christian

<sup>1</sup> The details of this development are obscure, but some of its more important features are discussed in an appendix on pp. 213 ff.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noticing that the modern psychiatrists would say that the sacraments "work" by suggestion; the theologians say by "faith." In the end they are not so far apart, and ultimately they will probably learn to understand and value each other's contributions.

sacraments. The evidence of thousands of pious Catholics is that this is really their experience. They feel that the sacraments of the Confessional and the Mass are for them really sources of spiritual life which help them in their difficulties, and are for them the centre of their religious life. We have not got the least right to say that the Catholics deceive themselves, that it is not so, and that it is merely superstition. What seems to me to be wrong is when Catholics say that no one else can obtain the same grace by any other means. There, I venture to think, the evidence is against them, for if we take the case of the modern Protestant, and listen to his evidence with the same respect which we have paid to the Catholic, we have to admit that he obtains the same grace by other means. He goes to the Church Service on Sunday morning, or Sunday evening. Is it not true that he does again and again receive from that service (which is not called a sacrament but is so in reality) exactly the same lifting up of his spiritual life? It helps him, and it sends him on his way a refreshed and a better man. Go on one step further, and take the Quaker. He goes to his Meeting, and there is no word spoken, yet he also goes away from it feeling spiritually refreshed and a better man, and I must add my

own testimony that so also do others who without being Quakers have been privileged to attend their meetings.

Catholic, Protestant, and Quaker in their respective ways all eat of the same spiritual food and drink of the same spiritual drink, and we are faced here by one of the really fundamental facts of existence, that for the great majority of the human race, and probably for all of us, spiritual life is always conveyed along material channels. That seems to me to be the truth which is contained in sacramental teaching. "All things are double, one against another," and we only obtain cognizance of the infinite and spiritual through the finite and material world. Therefore all these statements of religious experience are true as long as they are not made exclusive. All through we have a series of what I prefer to call sacraments. The Catholic has the consecrated element of the Mass. The Protestant—I am thinking mainly of the Protestant of Holland—has his Church Service with psalms and sermon, which is to him more than an address by the preacher because it links him up with the historic past of his church and nation, and becomes to him a sacrament, though he would not perhaps choose that word to describe it. The Quaker has found in his Meeting a sacrament in

which silence is the outward and visible sign. Surely the same thing is true of life as a whole. There are two ways of regarding life. We can regard it as a finite existence in which we are irretrievably imprisoned. Or we can regard it as a continuing process of constant revelation of an infinite world behind the finite one. That is sacramental: it leads us to realize that everything in life has a double value, and to see that success, failure, pleasure, and sorrow—to take some of the elemental things—are not merely incidents, favourable or unfavourable, in our existence. They are things through which we obtain the sacramental insight into the infinite world behind.

Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be.  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the children sport upon the shore  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

It was for that reason that in the history of Israel the servant of the prophet at one moment saw only the hills of Samaria, bleak and bare, and the next moment they seemed to him full of horses and chariots of fire.

Thus with regard to sacraments as means of



spiritual grace the Catholic was right, and is right, in claiming their efficiency as medicine for the sick soul, or as food for the soul that is not sick, and the Protestant has been right in resisting the Catholic claim to, as it were, an exclusive control. The question becomes a little more complicated if one passes on to the question of the physician, who is to administer the medicine—from the sacramental rite to the sacramental ministry itself. Here at first sight the Protestant seems to have good reason for his attack: he can say with justice that the Confessional and the Catholic priesthood have been responsible for untold misery and crime. He is, I believe, perfectly right: but he could say the same of the custom of taking drugs. *Abusus non tollit usum*. If a man is sick, whether physically or spiritually, he needs personal care: of course he will suffer if he fall into the hands of an ignorant, bad doctor, but the true remedy for that is to improve medical training, not to abolish physicians. The reaction at the Reformation against the Catholic priesthood led to the neglect of this fact.

It was felt, and rightly felt, that the Confessional had been abused, and that the priest had only the same power to "forgive sins" as any other man; but the fact was overlooked that the element of

value in the Confessional was that it afforded a refuge for the sick soul. It was desirable to educate the physician, and to change the method of the consultation; but Protestantism forgot that, taken at its best, the Confessional stood for the intercourse of the sick man with the physician. It was right, I believe, to abolish the Confessional; but it was wrong not to provide some means for doing the work which it was intended to perform.

The result has been that for many generations in Protestant countries the pulpit, the preaching of the Word, and the practice of philanthropy have largely obscured the "one thing needful"—the care of the spiritually sick; and the temptation of the clergy has been too much to busy themselves with the preaching of faith and the practice of good works, to study too little the necessity of those whose souls are crying out for help, and to assume that all of them are suffering from the same disease, and need the same treatment.

In the same way, to an extent which is perhaps seldom realized, both the strength and weakness of the Church of Rome<sup>1</sup> are to be found in its possession of the Confessional. It is its weakness,

<sup>1</sup> I do not feel that the same can be said of the English Church: my own experience has been that the Anglican priest who encourages confession is, as a rule, much inferior in wisdom to the Roman, though no doubt there are exceptions.

because by insisting on it for all, whether they be spiritually sick or not, it induces in the healthy a habit of, as it were, spiritual drug-taking; it is its strength, because it provides a means whereby the spiritually sick can obtain advice and treatment from men who, even if they have only learnt it empirically, have often a singularly good knowledge of the pathology of spiritual life.

In this respect no Protestant church can compete with the Roman Catholic, and the future of Christianity in Northern Europe depends on the power and the willingness of the Roman Catholics to change and develop the Confessional, and of the Protestants to make good their deficiencies, not, of course by a return to the Confessional so much as by an attempt to do in a modern way what the Confessional did in the manner of the Middle Ages. The first step in this direction would be the scientific study of psychology. The generation in which we live is one which pays less and less attention to the homiletics and diatribes of the pulpit; but it is also a generation which is spiritually more delicate than its predecessors; and it looks for a Church which will help it back to spiritual health, and will give individual attention to individual souls, recognizing the infinite variety of religious experiences, both healthy and diseased,

of which the human soul is capable. At the present moment in Protestant circles those who are—consciously or not—spiritually sick probably consult their doctor far more often than they do the clergy, and because the doctor is usually the man who, in the present constitution of society has the most knowledge of the obscure sides of human nature, it is not surprising that they do so; but the clergy should not forget that this fact is in itself an indictment of their competence.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHURCH AND GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism—The Theory of the Pleroma—Creation—The Christian Opposition—The Present Position—Redemption—The Resurrection of the Flesh—St. Paul—Catholics and Protestants—Purgatory—The Modern Man.

**E**VEN more important than the struggle with Heathenism was that with Gnosticism.

Gnosticism<sup>1</sup> was an illegitimate child of the Mystery religions. It accepted the prevailing astral theology and the *weltanschauung* which went with it, but it made concessions to the general human desire to obtain freedom by avoiding the determinism of destiny.

Its main features can easily be described, though it is impossible to attain either certainty

<sup>1</sup> Of recent literature the most necessary contributions are: A. Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*; W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, and the articles *Gnosis* and *Gnostiker* in Pauly Wissowa's *Real-Encyklopädie* and E. de Faye, *Introduction à l'étude du Gnosticisme*. See also P. Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-römische Kultur*, pp. 163-187, especially valuable as a short account with full and instructive references to the literature of the subject. For purely heathen Gnosticism Reitzenstein *Poimandres* is indispensable, though to be used with caution.

or clearness when the details are approached. It was held that "in the beginning" there was one primeval being, the All Father, and the Silence which surrounded him. Whether this is, strictly speaking, Dualism is perhaps not quite so certain as is sometimes maintained: I am not sure that some Gnostics were not trying to be Monists, but were impeded by the difficulty of thinking of existence without at once also thinking of non-existence as equally real. However that may be, the Gnostics certainly went on to conceive of the propagation of a series of Beings from this original pair, All-Father and Silence, until at last a complete system of Beings was obtained—the Pleroma,<sup>1</sup> or Fulness. These were (usually, at all events) regarded as a series of pairs, male and female, and were established in a fixed order, each with its own place in the Pleroma. But when one of them, moved by curiosity, tried to leave its place and to approach the Father, this was prevented, though ultimately the erring being was restored to its place. In the meantime, however, desire to leave its place had given rise to passion, and from this arose a new Being outside the Pleroma,

<sup>1</sup> I do not mean that the names of "All-Father," or "Silence," or "Pleroma" are to be found in all the systems, but they, or something like them, are commonly met with, especially in the partially Christianized forms of Gnosticism.

who, directly or indirectly, became the creator of the material world.<sup>1</sup> Matter thus divorced from the Pleroma was inherently evil; but in it, as in the creator, there was shut up a spark of the original spiritual life. To redeem this spark one of the other spiritual beings came out of the Pleroma, and in a more or less complicated manner effected the redemption of the spiritual from the material, so that ultimately the one could be annihilated and the other be restored to the Pleroma.

The main point of such speculation is that creation, including the stars, was a mistake, due to a "slip" as it were, on the part of an originally divine spiritual being, and that man is only under the domination of the astral necessity so far as his material nature is concerned; his spiritual nature belongs to a higher world, remote from matter. Therefore the chief object of man is to set free his spiritual nature from its material imprisonment, and this can be accomplished by means of secret "knowledge" and by making use of sacramental rites. The varieties of form in which this principle was worked out were manifold. Some of them—represented by the systems of Basilides and Valentinus—are known to us through the con-

<sup>1</sup> In some systems, at all events, this Being repeated the series of emanations in the Pleroma.

troversial writings of Christian writers, such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus, though their methods are probably largely caricatured. Some were really more Christian than Gnostic,<sup>1</sup> while other forms, such as those found in the Hermetic literature, remained purely heathen. Furthermore, in this multitude of sects we have a similar variety of detail in the theology, from the comparative simplicity of Poimandres or Marcion to the "witches' dance"—to adopt Bousset's phrase—of the Pistis Sophia.

But whatever the details were the main points remained always fixed: creation and redemption were connected with one another, not by identifying the creator and the redeemer, but by bringing in the redeemer to undo the work of creation, and human nature was split into two irreconcilable parts—flesh and spirit. This division of human nature did not always have the same effect. Sometimes it resulted in extreme asceticism: the flesh is evil; subdue it, ill-treat it, conquer it, was the gospel of many sects, especially perhaps the earlier ones.<sup>2</sup> But the opposite opinion was also

<sup>1</sup> Marcion indeed ought rather to be regarded as a Christian who took over the Gnostic *weltanschauung*, while Basilides was more probably—certainty is here not to be attained—a Gnostic who accepted the Christian story.

<sup>2</sup> I am not quite sure whether this chronological distinction holds good: the point is not clear.



held, that because the flesh was evil and the spirit good, the acts of the flesh were unimportant, and could be disregarded. Thus the same presupposition led to the opposed results of extreme asceticism and extreme licence.

It was these sides of Gnosticism which Catholic Christianity combated. Against the doctrine that creation was the wrong deed of a misguided spiritual being, which necessitated the intervention of a higher agency to redeem the results of its mistaken acts, it set the account in Genesis of the creation of a world originally pronounced good by the Almighty Father himself, and explained redemption as the act of his own son Jesus Christ, who had come to men, not to free them from material existence or to destroy the world, but to restore alike to mankind and to the world the perfection of which the devil had robbed them.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, against the radical division of flesh and spirit it placed the fact of the essential unity of human nature. On both points there can be no doubt but that Gnosticism was wrong. But

<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that much of the danger of Gnosticism was due to its resemblance to the Christian-Jewish *weltanschauung*. In both systems—Gnostic and Christian—there was the idea of a fallen spiritual being: in Christianity, however, he was not the creator but the corrupter of the world, and man was not his creation but his victim.

each of them deserves further discussion, because—as usually happens—the form in which the Church expressed its verdict though right as against its immediate opponent, becomes an obstacle to progress if it be regarded as a final statement of absolute truth, and is wielded as a weapon in controversies which were never heard of when the classical dogmas of Christianity were drawn up.

The Christian opposition to the Gnostic view of creation may be regarded as crystallized in the first article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God, the Father, almighty, the maker of heaven and earth," which represents not so much the desire to exclude heathen polytheism as Gnostic dualism.<sup>1</sup> The Gnostics had said that creation was not the act of the supreme God, whom they approached in religion, but of an inferior Demiurge, and that evil was part of its constitution. The Christians accepted the Jewish cosmogony of the first chapters of Genesis and held that the supreme

<sup>1</sup> At what date the phrase "maker of heaven and earth" was put into the Apostles' Creed is open to question. But the evidence of *Hermas, Mand. 1*, is conclusive that the idea expressed is primitive and goes back to the days of Gnostic controversy. McGiffert's book, *The Apostles' Creed*, may not have succeeded in showing that the whole creed is polemic against Marcion, but I think that his view holds good if for "Marcion" we say "Gnostic."

God had created the world in a state of goodness, and that evil having been introduced by inferior beings—men and angels—was not inherent in its constitution.

In other words, the Gnostics distinguished the God of religion from the God of creation while the Christians identified them. Looking back on the controversy, it is now possible to see that, while the Gnostics were clearly wrong, the Christians claimed too much knowledge. There are two lines by which we may approach the problem of the existence of God: the philosophical, which shows that the universe is due to a First Cause, whom we call God, and the religious, which shows that in his spiritual life man is conscious of contact with a being greater than himself and external to himself, whom we also call God. The question is whether there is evidence to separate or to identify these two "Gods." The Gnostic was certainly wrong in separating them, but was the Christian right in claiming to identify them with clear knowledge of the exact method of creation and of the origin of evil? That seems to me to be more than doubtful.

Two things are really important for defining the general position of the modern man as compared with that of the ancient Church. First, we

are convinced that there can be no antithesis between the Source of existence and the Guide of existence—or, to use abstract instead of concrete terms, between creation and religion. So far we agree entirely with the early Christians and reject Gnostic dualism. Secondly, we need to recognize with clearness that the primitive Church intended to go further than this and to accept as literal history the account of creation in Genesis. The majority of us do not accept this any longer, though some deceive themselves into thinking that they do so by treating it as allegory. It was not meant to be read as an allegory, and if you treat as an allegory what was written as a statement of fact you reject the intention of the author, even though by a process of exegetical violence you may succeed in persuading yourself that you can use his words to express your own feelings. It is an undeniable fact that to the educated world<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> What opened my eyes first to the importance of this was the discovery, when I was a curate in Lumley—a pit village in Durham—that the more intelligent miners, the “deputies,” who went to elementary classes in geology for professional purposes, realized the contradiction between the teaching which they received, the proofs of which they saw in the mines, and the details of the story in Genesis. Such men did not doubt but that the story in Genesis is the basis of Christianity, and therefore regarded Christianity as disproved. Yet we are told not to preach about “criticism.” The great danger to Christianity is not the open

cosmogony in Genesis is merely a piece of Semitic *weltanschauung* unacceptable to those who believe in modern scientific research. It is perhaps only theory against theory, but the modern world has chosen its theory, and its view of God has changed accordingly. The view which is represented in the creed is that above the universe there is an Almighty Being, who called the world into existence by a series of sudden acts, and at times still interposes in its working with acts of the same nature. The modern view says very little about the beginning of the world; frankly, it does not pretend to know how the universe came into being. But it recognizes a great purpose running through it so far as it can be observed both in space and time, and the modern man of good will is above all things anxious to bring his own efforts, whatever they may be, into harmony with this purpose. It is sometimes said that this is the abandonment of the belief in a personal God, but this is a misconception. From one point of view you cannot have a purpose without a person, and from another it is noteworthy that in common parlance "person" and "personal" have obtained a somewhat different meaning from that in which the

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attack, but the silent desertion of intelligent men, who go away for lack of instruction which they can understand or accept.

theologian speaks of a "personal God." I take it that when we say we believe in a personal God we ought to mean that the highest form of reality which we know is personality, and that therefore God, who is the ultimate reality, must be at least as much as "personal" implies. In that sense a personal God is certainly part of modern belief. But I fear that the phrase is often wrongly used to mean that personality, the highest form of reality *known*, is the absolutely highest *possible* form, or, still worse, to express a belief in an arbitrary being,<sup>1</sup> who is omnipotent, but only sometimes uses his power.

The difficulty is that the man in the street has often a higher ideal than the man in the pulpit; he believes intensely that the orderly universe has a purpose, and religion means to him very precisely just that subordination, previously alluded to, of his own will to this great purpose of which he sees the signs everywhere. It seems to him that the man in the pulpit very often teaches something less, not greater, than this, and he rejects such teaching, not because he is less religious, but be-

<sup>1</sup> As an indication how far we have travelled from any intelligent understanding of orthodox theology it should be noted that many will speak of God as "a person," and not realize at all that this is not an orthodox statement in any church of Christianity, except, perhaps, the Unitarian.

cause he is more intelligent, or, at all events, has more knowledge, than previous generations.

But that is not all: belief in God, whatever form it may take, is the basis of theistic religion. Christianity is more than this; it is essentially a religion of redemption. Its message is not merely to the "healthy-minded," of a great purpose in the world, but also to the wanderers and to the sick who ask help and succour. That is one of the main gifts of religion; I do not think in the light of the study of the history of religions it is possible to maintain that only Christianity has given it, and that no other faith has done so. On the contrary, I feel sure that the same gift was found by the initiates in many of the heathen Mysteries. But certainly Christianity has been strong because beyond all others it has made that gift to suffering humanity. It has done so more by means of the "consolations of religion," than by theological arguments, but it has also connected the gift with a certain definite theory to which, rather than to the fact of religious experience, the name of Redemption has been attached. The creeds crystallized the theory into the phrase, "For us men and for our salvation." It is important to note that here again we have the aftermath of the controversy with Gnosticism, and the historian

cannot but sometimes fear that institutional Christianity is in danger because it refuses to distinguish the truth of experience—the same in the present as in the past—from a form of expression which served its day against the Gnostics and is now worn out.

The theory of redemption accepted by the Church was even more closely united with the theory of creation than it was among the Gnostics. It is primarily Pauline:

Therefore as through the one man Sin came into the world and through Sin came Death, and so Death passed on to all men . . . so then as by one transgression the change to condemnation fell on all men, so also by one righteous act there came a change on all men to an acquittal of life, for just as by the disobedience of the One man the Many were put into the position of sinners, so also by the obedience of the One man the Many shall be put into the position of righteousness.

Against whom is St. Paul arguing? That is a problem which is very hard to answer, but in any case his statement soon came to serve as the foundation of the Christian theory of redemption. It rests on two points regarded as equally decisive: the life of Adam and the life of Jesus are counterbalancing historical facts. This is the view inherent in the creeds. But what becomes of it if you



admit that one of these two facts is not historical at all? The apologist of ecclesiastical orthodoxy is faced by this difficulty, and whether the realization of this will turn out to be the beginning of a new period of vigour for Christianity or of decay and death depends on the way in which the situation is faced.

The attempt to explain away the story of Creation and the Fall by means of allegory, as Plutarch dealt with his myths, offers no permanent help, though it is at first sight the easiest way, for it cannot be denied that the story was originally meant and subsequently accepted as literal truth. Such treatment can never satisfy the educated but untheological public, which is quick to see in it an evasion rather than a solution of the problem.

The alternative is to face the facts, and study the nature of religion. What is it that forms the experiential basis of all theories of redemption? It is the feeling of the blind man in the Gospel: "This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"—the consciousness of health after weakness and misery. That is the fundamental fact of all "redemptive" religions. The *weltanschauung* of the Gnostic, and of the Catholic, combined with experience, was bound to result in Gnostic and Catholic theories of redemption.

But we, almost unconsciously, have been obliged to take over from geologists, anthropologists, and biologists a new *weltanschauung*<sup>1</sup> which tells us that men have lived on the earth for innumerable centuries, that there is no evidence of a "Fall,"<sup>2</sup> that men have been always imperfect, but also have always, though with many relapses, struggled upwards, seeing the heights and stumbling towards them. To express the facts of religious consciousness in the language of this *weltanschauung* is surely not an impossibility, even though it has not yet been done adequately. Certainly it includes the consciousness that the sufferings of the righteous have always been the price of progress, and that the Purpose which we recognize as Divine not only wills the progress but also joins in the suffering. And equally certainly it includes the consciousness of the sick and miserable that—to use a metaphor—a strong hand has reached down and helped them out of the slough into which they had fallen and that they have passed out of their troubles.

Just as the beginning of the creed reflects the struggle against Gnosticism, so also does the end;

<sup>1</sup> We are bound to do so, because it rests on observed fact which cannot be put on one side.

<sup>2</sup> That is in the sense of a single great historical fact which perverted the whole race.

the belief in the "Resurrection of the flesh"<sup>1</sup> is purely polemic against the Gnostic view which separated spirit and flesh, making the spirit eternal and the flesh of no importance. It is desirable to understand clearly what the object of the Church was, because here also this was unquestionably correct, though it may be doubted whether it found the final or the best way of attaining it.

The Gnostic split human nature into two parts, one important, the other unimportant. Against this the Church reacted, and said in effect that it is impossible to split up human nature in this way; a man is a man, and is not a fortuitous combination of flesh and spirit, and action is not action by the spirit or by the flesh, but by the whole man. In many ways that is a healthy doctrine which commands our assent; it is indubitably true of our present existence. But the Catholic Christian went on to argue that therefore it must necessarily be so, so long as man retains his identity. The work of Athenagoras, for instance, on the Resurrection of the Dead is full of this contention. The difficulty is that we know that when we die our bodies remain for a longer or shorter period in the grave and are ultimately absorbed by the earth.

<sup>1</sup> It is, in view of the loose translation familiar to us, necessary to note that the Latin is *resurrectionem carnis*, not *corporis*.

If personal existence is only possible in the body of flesh, obviously the dead remain dead, even though they may rise again ultimately in a general resurrection of dead bodies. If we cannot exist as "we" without the flesh, no one whose flesh has died is still alive.<sup>1</sup> That position was not impossible so long as the expectation of the last day was imminent, but as soon as that receded into the background the difficulty was felt. What happened was that the older teaching of St. Paul was partially revived, and conflated rather than combined with the simple anti-Gnostic doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh.

St. Paul's doctrine was quite clear; he did not believe in a resurrection of the flesh; so much he conceded to his Greek opponents. He believed that the dead would rise changed into spiritual beings, and that the living would be changed in the same way but without dying. That doctrine he applied to the general resurrection; the question of the position of the dead between their death and the resurrection he does not touch upon clearly.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Because if the ego consists of flesh and spirit, not of one or the other alone, so long as one part—in this case, the flesh—is obviously dead, the ego is in a state of non-existence.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor., iii., does not, I think, refer to the resurrection, but to those who—and St. Paul regarded this as the normal experience—survived to the Parousia. Philipp. i., 23 ff., however, perhaps shows that, at least at times, he held more "Greek" views.

The Catholics soon went further and applied it not to the general resurrection but to the state of each person after death. Thus there arose the view that after death man exists as a spiritual being, but that at the general resurrection this spiritual being will receive back the body which he had before. Going on one step further this prolonged spiritual life was regarded as continuing the possibilities of development and improvement of the present life, even though its general character was fixed.

Such is the general outline of the development of the Catholic position as against the Gnostics, and influenced by the desire to exclude the pernicious doctrine that the acts of the flesh and of the spirit do not affect each other.

If we wish to look at it from the point of view of the necessities of the modern man, there are three things to claim attention: (1) the way in which this belief reacted on the form of belief in the resurrection of Jesus; (2) the value of Protestant amendments of the Catholic position; (3) the general possibilities which seem to be open to those who think in the manner of the modern man.

(1) The original form of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus is preserved by implication in 1 Cor. xv. The end of the Marcan narrative is

missing in the gospel of St. Mark, owing to the accidental or deliberate mutilation of the oldest copies,<sup>1</sup> and does not seem to have been followed either by Matthew or Luke. St. Paul is not very explicit on the subject, but he clearly regards the resurrection of Jesus as a model which the resurrection of Christians will ultimately follow, and he distinctly states that flesh and blood will not inherit the Kingdom of God. As it is quite clear that he regards Jesus as belonging to the Kingdom of God, it follows that he regarded the resurrection of Jesus as not of flesh and blood, but of a spiritual body. Obviously this is more in agreement with the Greek and ultimately with the Gnostic point of view (though Pauline and Gnostic teaching are in the main opposed to one another) than with the Catholic position, and Catholic Christianity rewrote the narrative in the later gospels, emphasizing the belief that in the resurrection of Jesus there was a resurrection or resuscitation of the flesh.<sup>2</sup> In this way, owing to the influence of the

<sup>1</sup> A few critics, of whom Wellhausen is the most distinguished, think that the original narration really ended with Mk. xvi., 8, but this seems to me very improbable.

<sup>2</sup> It is, I think, possible to trace a great part of the details of the change which the narration underwent. I have endeavoured to do this with considerable minuteness in the *Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, published by Williams & Norgate in England and by the Putnams in America.

struggle with Gnosticism, the Catholic theologian was brought to the belief in the resuscitation of the buried flesh of Jesus, although this was not the belief of St. Paul<sup>1</sup>—and if it was not the belief of St. Paul it is not likely that it was the belief of the other disciples.

(2) The Protestant reformation cut out from the Catholic theology the belief in a period of further probation and purgation after death. It kept the belief in the final judgment of the last day. It did so really because the belief in purgatory had been exploited for financial advantage by the baser elements in the Roman Church, and it justified its act by the absence of proof in Scripture. To the modern mind Protestantism on this subject, as on others, seems to have chosen the wrong line. To us a belief in purgatory, which implies development and further education, is an infinitely more acceptable doctrine than the Protestant presentation of a period of age-long changeless waiting, followed by a judgment which inflicts eternal recompenses for temporal acts. We no longer can dissociate life from development, or from

<sup>1</sup> It is possible—I think even probable—that St. Paul believed in a transmutation of the buried flesh into the risen spirit, but that is not the same thing as resuscitation. I do not argue that it is easier to believe, or has better evidence in its support, but merely that it is different from the later Catholic teaching.

continuity; the man of to-day can easily believe that after death his life will pass into a new state of existence, conditioned by his actions here, and influencing his position in still remoter states, but he not so much rejects as is unable to take seriously the common Protestant theology which asks him to believe that when he buries the body of some friend he is to think that "now the labourer's task is o'er" and the dead are to "sleep until the Resurrection day." The gospel of hope and faith is just the reverse, that the labourer's task is *not* over, and that the life which has here been faithful in a few matters has gone forth to renewed service in some other sphere of action. What we need is teaching which keeps the idea of purgation and education after death, and finally gives up the Jewish belief in a single "day of judgment."

(3) But in what form will this higher service be achieved? There we pass the limits of human knowledge, and it is not faith but superstition which asks us to attach the value of certain knowledge to unsubstantiated opinion. Still, so far as opinions go, there seem to me to be two lines upon which modern thought is advancing, and the Christian churches, if they wish to survive, cannot ignore them.

First, we can believe in the permanence of



individuality, apart from the body. That is to say, we can believe that when we die our bodies will slowly disappear through the process of chemical dissolution, but that *we*, that which makes us what we are, will survive; that there is not only a continuity of life, but a continuity of that form of consciousness which makes our life what it is as distinct from any one else's form of life. That is a possibility. Of course if we believe this, we are not necessarily obliged to say that we believe that that will be the last form of change. There may be something more. Obviously, however, we have here come to the limits of human understanding, and it is really not profitable to carry speculation any further. But I do wish to express my own feeling that there is more value in experimental research in this direction than theologians have admitted. It is a curious thing that, as a matter of practice, the theologian who believes most strongly in the survival of life after death is very often the last person to admit the cogency of any evidence which goes to show that there really is such a survival. We find that the men who have taken most interest in experimental research for any signs of the survival of consciousness after death are not theologians. Yet, though it is doubtful how far the evidence takes us on this

line, it is obvious that we cannot neglect it, if we want to study the question properly. In view of the extremely distinguished men of science who are—I will not say prepared to accept such evidence—but who are prepared to say that they regard it as calling for further research I do not think it is a possible attitude for theologians to put it all on one side. Whether the evidence will ultimately prove convincing is to my mind still doubtful. If it succeed in making good its case, the matter is, up to a point, settled. If it fail, renewed emphasis will be laid on an alternative possibility.

The question will be raised, far more pointedly than has yet been the case, whether we may not be mistaken in thinking that the difference between “you” and “me” is so very important. Suppose that that is only the limitation of life, not the expression of it; that what happens after death is that the life which has been, as it were, bottled up in our individualities, is released, and goes back into the main stream. That is also a survival of life after death.<sup>1</sup> We have no right even to say that in that case it does not matter

<sup>1</sup> Those who object most vigorously to this view seem to confuse the survival of life with the survival of memory. Yet the fact that few of us have any memory of our first two years of existence does not usually make us deny that we were alive during that period.

what we do with our own little bit of life. It *does* matter, because we are affecting the main stream after we return to it. That is, therefore, also a possibility.

I am not personally able to go any further as yet. I do not believe in a resurrection of my flesh; I do believe in the permanence of life, but I do not see that we have any satisfactory evidence to enable us to say what form that permanence of life will take. It seems clear that whatever form it may take, the use we make now of our life bears a direct relation to the value of life as a whole. Therefore, it is, after all, the attitude of deeper faith to be content to acknowledge our ignorance of the details. Faith is neither a substitute for knowledge, nor opinion unbased on evidence, but trust in the guidance of a higher power. The men of to-day do not feel willing to accept opinion on points outside the reach of observation, but though they use other language to express it, they are willing to walk, unafraid, through the valley of the shadow of death, because they trust even then the guidance which they have followed in the days of their strength.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHURCH AND UNINSTRUCTED CHRISTIANITY

*Vulgär Christentum*—Its Christology—History and Experience—  
Docetism—Its Opposite—Catholic Christology—Applica-  
tion to Christian Experience—The Modernist's Position.

THE Christianity of the uninstructed man<sup>1</sup> forms in some ways a connecting link between Gnosticism and Catholicism, though it was infinitely nearer to the latter. It was for long somewhat overlooked by historians, and the documents representing it were explained away or neglected altogether, but in recent years it has been brought to the front under various aspects by H. Usener<sup>2</sup> and C. Schmidt in Germany,<sup>3</sup> and by F. C. Conybeare in England. Usener and Conybeare speak of adoptionist Christianity, but Schmidt's name of *vulgär Christentum* is a more satisfactory name.<sup>4</sup> From the nature of the

<sup>1</sup> By this somewhat clumsy periphrasis I am trying to find an equivalent for the German *vulgär Christentum*.

<sup>2</sup> Especially in his *Weihnachtsfest*.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta Pauli*, pp. 183 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Especially since in some ways some forms of this type of thought were at least as much docetic as adoptionist.

case there are no perfect representations in literature, but II. Clement, Hermas, the Acts of Paul, perhaps the Odes of Solomon and Acts of John, and even the gospel of Peter may be taken as typical examples. One of the most pressing needs of modern research is a good monograph of this subject, focusing the various subordinate questions, but at present it is not possible to do more than indicate its outlines.

The thought of the "uninstructed Christian" was simple: his view was that the world was created good (therefore he was not a Gnostic); and that man had been given the special favour of being the son of God,<sup>1</sup> but had lost this relationship to his Father through the Fall. From that moment history had become a struggle between God, who set to work to counteract the Fall by means of his chosen people, Israel, and the prince of this world, the devil, who resisted the efforts of God, announced himself to be God, and bound all humanity to himself by means of the lusts of the flesh. The result of the devil's machinations was ignorance, error, pleasure, and death, which could only be abolished by the ultimate judgment of God. But in his mercy God sent his holy spirit into the Virgin Mary in order to redeem men and to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *loc. cit.*, 3, 38.

destroy the dominion of evil over flesh by becoming flesh.<sup>1</sup> This holy spirit which thus became incarnate was the same which had spoken through the Jewish prophets, so that the Christian faith rested throughout on the Spirit—the Spirit who had given “the prophets” to Israel and later on had given “the gospel” through the Christ to the Christians.

This Christology is not the same as that which became traditional. The incarnation is the incarnation of the Spirit. Though such Christians spoke of Father, Son, and Spirit, they meant by the Son the being of flesh which had been the tabernacle of the Spirit and had been taken up into the Godhead, so that the Trinity consisted of the Father, Spirit, and Jesus in whom the Spirit had been and was incarnate. That is not the same, we must observe, as the Trinity of orthodox Catholic theology, because it does not distinguish between the Son, or Logos, and the Spirit.

The Shepherd of Hermas (Simil. 5) is one of the most elaborate examples of this type of doctrine of the incarnation. He describes how the Spirit came to help mankind, and took up its abode in the

<sup>1</sup> In some varieties of thought the baptism took the place of the birth, and indeed there was for several centuries a confusion of thought on the point, which is reflected in the history of Christmas and Epiphany, as Usener has shown.

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flesh of a certain human being who is never mentioned, but is obviously intended for Jesus. As a reward for perfect life this human being was rewarded by the Father and the Spirit (who is also called the Son in this connection), by being taken up into the Godhead, and the same reward is offered to all who should live in accordance with his example.

It is for this reason that this type of thought is known as adoptionist, though it is not always clear at what moment the adoption of Jesus into the Godhead is supposed to take place—birth, baptism or resurrection. To point out its logical defects is not hard, and the better theology of Catholic Christianity reacted against its errors, but as a preliminary we must note the strength of this popular Christianity.

It represented the life of Jesus as a career of ascetic purity, culminating in apotheosis, and it offered to Christians the reward which had already been given to the Christ. God had become man in order that men might become God. The uneducated Christian stated it crudely, but in the effort to improve away the crudeness theologians in the end lost part of a necessary element of religious thought.

The first Christians spoke of Christ as the first

born among many brethren, and the believers as joint heirs with Christ. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," said St. Paul, applying to the faithful the same word as he does to the Christ. But in the desire to emphasize the greatness of Jesus later Christianity sought to obtain, as it were, a heightened contrast, and by ignoring that side of the teaching of primitive Christianity, obscured the teaching of St. Paul which represented the Christian as well as the Christ as a son of God.<sup>1</sup>

But the ordinary man in the second century had not yet developed this tendency. His real hope was that by means of his religion he could become a son of God, and he had not yet learnt that curious trick of language which distinguishes between the "son of God" and the "child of God." We all know how in traditional teaching it is quite a commonplace to say that we are all children of God, hardly ever to say that the Christian is a son of God. The custom is partly based on reverence, partly on deistic tradition, and partly on mere lack of clearness of thought.

All this is only to say in other words that this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Heb. i., 1: 'God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spake to us by a son' ( $\nu\iota\hat{\omega}$ , not  $\tau\hat{\omega}$   $\nu\iota\hat{\omega}$ ).



*vulgär Christentum* kept a vivid consciousness of the primitive belief of the first Greek Christians that the Lord was the centre of the community, that the Lord was the Spirit, that the Lord was also Jesus, and that they also possessed the Spirit. But it was inevitable that these simple affirmations of the religious consciousness should on closer examination be developed into a connected system of theology. Attempts were made on various lines, and the ultimate development of Christian theology represents in the main the verdict of the more intelligent and philosophical theologians upon the one-sided efforts of *vulgär Christentum*, to cope with the rival, or perhaps more properly complementary, claims of historical fact and religious experience.

In the first place there was the line struck out by the Christian who, starting from the identification of the centre of his life with "Christ," and the identification of this Christ with the Jesus of history, under the influence of the conviction that the Lord is the Spirit went on to say that this Jesus, who was the Christ, was also a spiritual being in the time of his human life in the same sense as he is a spiritual being now. That is to say, they threw back the conclusions of religious experience on to the past, and subordinated historical evidence

to their own spiritual experience. The result was the statement that Jesus had never been a man of flesh and blood, because he had always been spirit, and that if he had seemed to be flesh and blood, he was not really so; he had adopted the form of flesh and blood for the purpose of manifesting himself, but not the reality of it—it was only appearance.

It is obvious that this is really the negation of the original position: it destroys the parallelism between the Christ and the Christian, and it rapidly becomes a Gnostic view of the flesh, though without the Gnostic view of creation. The Acts of John is probably a fair specimen of this “docetic”<sup>1</sup> branch of *vulgär Christentum*. Nevertheless we must, I believe, see in it a sincere attempt to act in the supposed interests of religion. It was an effort to reconstruct history in accordance with religious experience, and it is extraordinarily interesting to notice that the same thing is happening at the present day in the movement headed by Professor Drews in Germany and by Professor Smith in America. These scholars have rejoiced in arguments showing that there never was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, not because they are enemies of religion, but because they think that

<sup>1</sup> From *δοκεῖν*, to seem, because the humanity of Jesus was only in semblance.

they are doing a service to religion by cutting it loose from history. To a quite extraordinary extent this repeats the history of the second century, and the controversy whether the Jesus whom men knew as the centre of their religion had ever been a real man of flesh and blood.

Such was the result of beginning with religious experience, and attempting to make it a substitute for historical evidence. The opposite line of thought was also followed. There were those who felt that their knowledge of facts justified them in the statement that Jesus of Nazareth had really been a man, a human being. They would yield nothing to those who told them that his humanity was in any sense merely apparent. Starting from this they went on to argue that therefore the Christ of religion must possess to all eternity a body of flesh and blood. He might be in heaven at the right hand of God, but he was, nevertheless, a Jesus with flesh and blood, and it was he, that man of flesh and blood, who was to be accepted as the adequate centre of religion. The basis of the argument was the facts of history. If anyone felt that his religious experience did not agree with it, and urged that the Lord was a Spirit, it only proved that his theology was heretical and his religion a vain thing.

These Christians were doing the exact reverse of the docetic wing of *vulgär Christentum*. They were true to the facts of history, and tried to make religious experience yield to them, by forcibly interpreting it just as their opponents were forcibly interpreting history in mistaken loyalty to the experience of religion. Each was doing the right thing in the wrong place, and it would be wearisome to try and follow out the development of the ensuing controversies which, in different forms, went on for centuries, but in the interests of a much-abused class the fact is worth emphasizing that the effort of the theologians—as distinct from the uninstructed Christians—was to do justice to both sides of the question. On the one hand, they tried to do justice to the facts of history by historical methods. Their methods were not ours, and their reconstruction of facts was not the same as ours would be, but they did their best according to the knowledge of those days. They insisted that Jesus of Nazareth had really been human, really flesh and blood, because they had the records, and they judged history by historical methods. On the other hand, they tried to do justice to the facts of religious experience by insisting that the centre of our religious life is spirit, and not flesh and blood. Therefore they tried to settle all the

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different forms of this controversy in such a way that, when it was a matter of history, justice should be done to the facts of history, and when it was a matter of religion, to the experience of religious life. It was impossible to find any single formula which covered the whole case, and practically what happened was that the Church occupied itself for several centuries in saying "No" in various accents of emphasis to inadequate propositions which were presented for the speedy solution<sup>†</sup> of insoluble problems.

For instance, an attempt was made to say: "Jesus is God: we know that through religion. He was also man: we know that through history. Therefore, he must have been something between the two, a sort of inferior god, or an exaggerated superman." But the intellect of the Church said that this was neither history nor religion, but a confusion of thought. And Arianism and its successors were never accepted.

Or again, it was sometimes said, "Jesus was really two persons. He was a human person and a divine person." But the intellect of the Church replied that this was also impossible, because personality must be one. And what is known as Nestorianism<sup>†</sup> was rejected.

<sup>†</sup> It is very doubtful whether—to speak paradoxically—Nes-

Thus in the end a series of statements was developed which the scoffer can describe—though very unjustly—as taking away with one hand everything that has been given with the other; and the reason why that way of dealing with the matter is, after all, the most successful, is the fact—so well known to the schoolmen—that all definition is negation. Directly we begin to define anything we imply that it is not something else. Can we do that with God? The difficulty is that we cannot say God is everything, and at the same time define him; because, directly we do, we begin to say something which we have at once to unsay, since, in so far as it is a definition, it is also a negation, and we must not deny anything of God.<sup>1</sup>

If we apply this a little further to the person of Christ, we see the necessary conclusion. It was necessary to say “man,” because of history; and to say “God” because of experience. In so far as Christ was God the epithets of eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, everlasting, were inevitable. In so far as he was man they were impossible. And yet no one could say that the human Jesus

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torius was really a Nestorian; cf. Bethune Baker's *Nestorius and his Teaching*.

<sup>1</sup> Unless we can prove that there is no reality in that which we deny.

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was limited, temporary, or imperfect, and the divine Christ eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, everlasting, because, if so, the one personality was split into two. That was also impossible; the facts of history were decisive, Jesus was one person, and not two.

Thus it came to pass that when the intellect of the Church finally attempted to sum up the results, it was obliged to say that in the Christ there was a divine nature and a human nature so united in one person that they could not be separated, and yet so that they must on no account be confused. Unless men knew what they meant by it they could scarcely say that Jesus was God, but if they knew they not only could but must say it, for it meant that the union between these two elements, as we should say, or two natures, as the early theologians said, in the one person was so complete that by a process of mutual exchange (the *communicatio idiomatum*) all epithets could be applied to the one nature which were applicable to the other.

It is a maze of theological subtlety which we immediately enter as soon as we begin to express our thoughts along these lines of reasoning; and only those who by the expenditure of much time have learnt to use the language of the first six,

centuries can really appreciate how admirable it is.

It is not our language. We cannot "talk theology" half so well in our language as the Greeks could talk it in theirs sixteen hundred years ago, and the pity is that so many people either pour scorn on these subtle formulae, or apply them mechanically to other problems, without either understanding their origin, or sympathizing with their purpose. I should be the last person in the world to suggest that we can take, for instance, the Athanasian Creed as a representation of modern thought, or correct in its prognosis of damnation for the heterodox, but I am prepared to say that if you can, by study, teach yourself the way to use it, there is no document which more adequately struggles to represent two sides of truth simultaneously than the Athanasian Creed does. I am bound to add that when you have done this you may have reason to object to its use by an ordinary congregation, because it is unedifying to see or hear intelligent people reciting in public worship documents which they do not understand, probably misinterpret, and certainly dislike.

Nevertheless the fact that the Athanasian Creed is so unintelligible ought to remind us that we have still to deal with the perpetual struggle



between history and experience. On the one hand religion is a matter of personal, intimate experience; its centre is for each of us in our own hearts; and our own experience is valid for ourselves. It is here, and it is now. Anything which takes away from the full force of that perception is wrong. But, on the other hand, we are the result of a historical process, and are ourselves "historical facts." Even our most intimate experience is conditioned by history, because we ourselves belong to it, and we cannot without harm attempt to sever ourselves from the historical development which has produced us, and which conditions our experience. Therefore we have the same struggle as our spiritual ancestors had. If we wish to be intelligent and intelligible, we cannot state religious experience without taking the facts of history into consideration, and for the religious side of life history means the history of the whole of Christianity—not merely of its beginning. We cannot without loss cut ourselves loose from it, and the problem is, to make ourselves the heirs of history without becoming its slaves.

But I do not desire to labour that obvious truth so much as to come into closer contact with the problem presented by the doctrine of the "two natures" in Christ.

It is perfectly plain that, as it stands at present, this doctrine belongs to a past generation. We can only appreciate it with difficulty, by learning the language in which it is expressed. If we yield to the temptation to put it on one side, we soon find ourselves lapsing into mere homiletic platitude or into some form of *vulgär Christentum*—in other words, into heresy. It is therefore necessary to grapple with it, and develop it until we bring it once more into touch with the facts of life as we see them.

We have, as an intellectual legacy from the past, the doctrine of Jesus as a being, a person, with two natures, human and divine. Leave that on one side and turn to our own self-knowledge. Is it not true that, as a matter of fact, in our own selves there is a double element? It seems to me that all of us have constantly to deal with two elements in life in ourselves and in other people. There is, on the one hand, the element which makes it extraordinarily hard for us to understand anybody else; which makes it extraordinarily hard for any two people to work together without quarrelling; which makes us all have a tendency to quarrel and fight for our own supposed advantages—the fact that we resist it is the essence of civilization. This element which limits, which separates, which

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drags down, although there are certain objections to the use of the word, may fairly be called "human," though the difficulty with all these points is that thought is struggling with language, and language often gets the better of the struggle. Still I think that I run no risk of being misunderstood in saying that this limiting, separating, and dividing element, of which we are all conscious, is "human" nature in the narrower sense.

On the other hand, we are conscious of another element which is unifying, which brings people together, which enables us at times to feel that we are understanding each other in some sense more than the mere intellectual comprehension of carefully chosen phraseology. We are, as we say, "in touch" with one another; we feel that we pass our normal limitations, and that there is a sense in which the truth that we are really all "one" is greater than the truth that we are all separate, for we are not so much coming together as realizing that on the highest side of life we have never been separated at all. That is the element which is at the centre of all corporate life, and makes for co-operation, for unity, for peace, for civilization, and seems to me truly to deserve the name of divine, because nowhere can I see anything higher.

But this is the application to personality<sup>1</sup> as a whole of what Catholic theology—a different thing from *vulgär Christentum*—said of the one person of Jesus, and though it is possible that the adjectives, human and divine, and the substantives, nature and person, could with advantage be replaced by a different phraseology, it is in this kind of development that Christian theology has the opportunity to keep the historical continuity of a great intellectual tradition, and at the same time to join hands with modern psychology.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, this line of thought enables us to see more clearly than any other that progress, not only in thought, but in life as a whole, is the conscious development of the one side and the conscious keeping in check of the other side of personality. That seems to me the intellectual statement of the real work of life: the conscious effort of the individual and of society to develop

<sup>1</sup> If anyone will read, for instance, Dorner's *History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, he will, I think, probably gain the impression that the real contribution of the classical period of Christian theology was to state the problem: "What is personality?" and to suggest the lines on which it must be faced. Here again it is, to my mind, the modernist who is really taking his inheritance and trying to develop it.

<sup>2</sup> I may be allowed to say that I believe that this amounts to much the same as Dr. Sanday's position in his *Christologies*, though it is differently expressed.

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the divine element which makes for unity, for peace, for co-operation.

Is not this exactly what the best early Christian theology expressed by its Logos doctrine? We must of course allow for the fact that the men of that generation, in theology as in everything else, started with a general hypothesis and worked inwards: we start from the other end and work outwards, as we have learnt to do in every branch of science. The theologian cannot claim any right to make use of a method which has been given up by everyone else. But allowing for this difference of attitude the "Logos doctrine" of the Church and some such analysis of life as that sketched above are really two statements of the same view.

This brings me to one of the burning questions of modern theological Christian thought. It is often said that the "Modernist" is undermining or even denying the central doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the answer to this accusation is closely connected with the general subject of this chapter. The "Modernist" believes that he is the true heir of the Catholic theology, while his opponents seem to him to represent a recrudescence of some of the one-sided and intellectually indefensible positions of *vulgär Christentum*.

The doctrine of the "two natures" and the

Johannine Logos doctrine of which it is the logical conclusion are the expression of the view which, if we accept certain metaphysical forms of statement, may reasonably be taken of a certain complex of facts belonging partly to history, partly to religious experience. Although subject on the one hand to development, so far as it deals only with the life of Jesus, and says nothing about other "persons," and, on the other, to amendment so far as the historical facts dealt with obtain a different complexion in the light of wider knowledge and deeper study, it remains one of the triumphs of human intellect, and the Modernist has not the slightest hesitation in accepting it. But it seems to him that the doctrines often presented to him by those who think that they are orthodox are something quite different. Men have forgotten or put on one side as unintelligible the Catholic theology, and have set up a rival which puts "the historic Jesus" in the place of the Logos. It is historically inaccurate and spiritually unsatisfying. It is the sort of theology which sings sentimental hymns about,

Those mighty hands which rule the sky no earthly  
toil refuse,  
The Maker of the stars on high an humble trade  
pursues.

That is language which the extremest extension of the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* could scarcely justify, and as most of those using it are wholly ignorant of that profound and subtle dogma it is in their mouths the merest recrudescence of the Jesus-cultus of *vulgär Christentum*.

The Modernist worships the Logos: not because of any ecclesiastical authority, but because heart and mind agree to tell him that this is the way of truth in which his fathers walked. He is not prepared to narrow down his perception of the Logos, or (to use more theological language) to sacrifice his recognition of the divine working of the Logos in all time and in all life in order to obtain a spurious heightening of contrast for the recognition which he gives to the Logos in Jesus.

Moreover, personally—I do not dare speak for all Modernists—I feel that these admirable and penetrating doctrines of Catholic theology are not intelligible to ordinary congregations. I know that I cannot state them equally well in any other language. But I also know that in this language, however admirable, they are not intelligible to most people, because the technical terms are unknown to them, or, still worse, have popularly a different meaning. Therefore I prefer to restate these truths in modern language, by which I mean

in a different phraseology, and I dissent wholly from those who try to achieve what they call restatement by using the old phraseology in a new sense. The Catholic theology is magnificent: but it is not intelligible except to properly trained theological intellects. My wish is to make the view of life which it represents intelligible by putting it into modern language, nor do I find this an impossible task, but I admire the language of the old theologians too much not to protest against attempts to mutilate it or to pretend that it speaks in our phraseology. Some of the ostensible defenders of Christian theology understand neither its history nor its meaning, and the parody which they present is the greatest intellectual danger which Christianity has now to face.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Christianity as Movement—Modern Requirements—Justice—  
The Atonement—Suffering—The Observation of Religious  
Facts—Its Effect—The Churches and Research in Theo-  
logy—The Training of the Clergy—The Churches and  
Schism—The Theory of Ordination—The Social Revolution  
—The Need of a Higher Ethical Vision.

**I**N the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to sketch the developments of the heritage handed down to us from the Early Church in the form of theology, ethics, and ministry. But far more important than to trace the process described in its details, many of which are certainly obscure and possibly capable of other interpretation in the light of increasing knowledge, is the recognition that progressive movement, and not the retention of a fixed position, has throughout been the condition of vigorous life.

By fulfilling that condition the Early Church succeeded in giving to the world a theology which satisfied the necessity of speaking in a language intelligible to that generation. It was no more

final than any attempt of the finite to explain the infinite can ever be. But it was an adequate representation of the reaction of the highest spiritual life upon the keenest intellects of their time.

In the same way the Church produced a system of sacraments and a ministry to which we cannot refuse the praise of having built up the spiritual life of Western civilization, even though we may recognize that the theory based upon them was often erroneous, and that in the end the abuse of the system was often disastrous. Similarly also it provided a combination of world-renouncing and world-accepting ethics which for generations proved a satisfactory guide to the efforts of the best men to serve the society to which they belonged without forgetting that higher world of eternal realities of which all enjoy a vision at times, though none see it permanently or with a steady gaze.

To do these things was the heritage, with modifications, but not essentially changed, passed on from the single Catholic Church of the Middle Ages to the many Churches of modern Christianity. It is now presented for our acceptance. In this last chapter, therefore, I desire to emphasize what seem to me to be the conditions which we

must fulfil if we wish to discharge the stewardship offered to us.

Christianity has always been a movement: the stewardship of faith is to carry on the movement. We must continue the same process of changing theology and changing institutional life which is revealed to us by the study of history. To all sides of the problems raised by the recognition of this fact, no man can give an adequate answer; but no man who lives in any degree in the present, and sees the events which are changing the conditions of human life, ought to fail to see that these are facts which organized Christianity must take more seriously than it seems to do at present. These may conveniently be treated under the heads of theology, the ministry of the Church, and the extension of Christian ethics.

A theologian may perhaps be forgiven if he begin with the duty of the churches toward theology, even though he would be the last to claim that this is the most important point. There is a general consensus, even amongst the most conservative, that "restatement" is imperatively called for, but it is of primary importance to recognize that what the churches are asked to produce is not a restatement of traditional theology but a

restatement of religion in modern language. A more or less ingenious amendment of mediaeval theological statement will satisfy no one, for the artificial admixture of modern thought and ancient language produces something as remote from an articulate and intelligent theology as "pidgin" English is from the language of educated Englishmen.

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to explain, in modern language, some of the features of religious life both among the early Christians and in our own generation; but no one can at present hope adequately to cover the whole ground. More important than attempts to build without sufficient material is the effort to realize some of the conditions of modern thought which must be considered if we wish to produce a statement of religion which will help the next generation.

In the first place we have a different sense of abstract justice from that which existed even a century ago. This cuts at the root of many theological statements which presented little difficulty to our ancestors.

For instance, the theology of the past offered little or no hope for the salvation of an unbaptized person, however good a life he may have led; even

the fate of unbaptized infants was regarded as doubtful. At present it is safe to say that no one who maintains such monstrous propositions will even gain a hearing from the general public. Yet that is not because the old view misrepresented the logical results of the traditional theological system, but because the increased sense of abstract justice puts such teaching out of court, and regards it as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory from which it was deduced.

Or, again, the traditional presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement is becoming daily less and less acceptable to our generation because it clashes with our sense of justice. It seems to represent the suffering of Jesus as a unique instance of the redemptive power of innocent suffering, to depict God as in some sense standing outside this process, accepting it as an offering to himself, and in some way changing his attitude to the guilty in consequence of it.<sup>1</sup> If I am not much mistaken, the clash between this teaching and the sense of justice was one of the causes which led the "Lux Mundi" school of theologians

<sup>1</sup> Theologians have, of course, from the time of Anselm, felt the difficulty of the position, but they have never wholly succeeded in meeting it. The important thing, however, is that the non-theological but educated public is now aroused to a consciousness of the problem.

in Oxford in the nineties to say in their general teaching so much about the Incarnation and so little about the Atonement.

Yet here again the policy of leaving difficulties on one side will not long be successful. Behind the doctrine of the Atonement is the problem of innocent suffering in general. No view of life is complete which does not recognize that progress is conditional on suffering, and that this suffering is effective in proportion as it is the suffering of the innocent.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, we are obliged to go further and say that the only thinkable belief is not that God stands outside the world and wills it to endure suffering, but that he, as immanent in it, shares in its travail, which he wills for himself as well as for us. The modern theologian feels that this is the fundamental truth of the doctrine of the Atonement: it is the eternal suffering of the Logos which redeems and raises the Universe. Why suffering should in this way be essential to life we do not know: but whereas the figure of the suffering God in a suffering world may prove—I think will prove—to be irreconcilable with the traditional conception of omnipotence,<sup>2</sup> it does not outrage the

<sup>1</sup> Though the innocent cannot voluntarily seek it, but only benefit the world by accepting the cup which is given them to drink in the course of their appointed career.

<sup>2</sup> I mean that instead of regarding God as a being who has

sense of justice. More and more men accept the suffering of the innocent as one of the facts of life, but they do so only if it be presented to them as the birth pains of some better thing, not as the torturing punishment inflicted by a judge. The doctrine of the Atonement, like that of the Incarnation of the Logos, has its permanent place in human thought, but the churches will retain the privilege of being its exponents only if they prove equal to the task of beginning its explanation with the facts of living experience, and place the suffering of Jesus within and not without the ever-widening circle of suffering yet redeeming and triumphant life. If the churches prove unequal to their task, and sacrifice the truth of experience to the tradition of expression, the world will pass them by and listen by preference to men and societies who are more alive to the necessities of the present.

It will also be necessary to accept much more definitely the fact that all modern scientific study begins with the observation of fact and not with the development of theory. In the Middle Ages

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unlimited power to do anything in an arbitrary and miraculously unconditional manner, we shall regard him as the repository of "all the power that there is," and look on him as "able to do all things which can be done." But I think that some Liberals need to remember that this is not what omnipotence originally meant.

theory came first and facts were quoted to prove the correctness of accepted theory. That is no doubt a branch of work which has its value, but we have learnt that it is far more important to observe facts and to modify theories in accordance with them.

In the field of theology this was done by William James, who was a pioneer in this direction, and though there may be some doubt as to whether he applied his method in the best way, there can be none as to the value of the method itself. Unfortunately the theologian, especially in England, is too often primarily a historian rather than a student of living religion, and I can certainly make no claim to be an exception, but I would suggest that the treatment of Christology on pp. 181 ff. is a conscious attempt to adopt the application of the modern method of beginning with the facts of observed religion, and of working back from them to the appreciation of similar facts in history.

This method will mean that in the future theologians will give up trying to compress the truth into short statements and claiming them as authoritative. Theology can no more be stated shortly than any other science, and no statement has any authority unless it can be shown to be true. No one thinks of testing the correctness of a great



chemist's view by his acceptance of a short statement, or of attaching authority to his opinion apart from evidence. In the future it will seem equally absurd to ask men to accept or reject statements which profess to give short categorical solutions to some of the most difficult problems of philosophy and theology, and from their answers to pass judgment alike on their theological and religious standing. Theological statement will before long be accepted exactly so far as it is based on evidence, just as is the case with any other science, otherwise it will be regarded as superstition. Moreover, it will make no claim to special sources of knowledge once revealed and now hidden, for whereas the theological systems of the past were based on a triumphant but unfounded belief in supernatural knowledge, the systems of tomorrow will be bounded, like those of other sciences, by the securer though humbler recognition of natural ignorance. We believe that we can see that life is governed by purpose, and to that purpose we endeavour to make our own wills subordinate; but we are conscious that its fullness, its origin, and its end are outside the scope of our understanding. We are therefore not prepared to make the value of religion, which is our present possession, dependent on the correctness of our guesses at things

outside the limitations of our knowledge. We cannot wholly explain the Universe, and we are weary of attempts to cover up the insufficiency of the intellect by a superabundance of words. We know that we are limited in our powers and narrow in our vision, but we seek in our better moments to develop that element in our personality which binds us to others and makes us work for the general common good of all, even to the sacrifice of ourselves. We know that we develop this element, partly in our private life in which we stretch out our hands to that power in the universe which seems to be to us what we would fain be to our children, and partly in the corporate life in which we meet together with others. It is this side of life, and all that we gain from it, that we mean by religion; we know that in it we sometimes seem to approach more nearly than in any other way to reality, and to see through the veil of phenomena. The experience of it is the basis of religious life, and membership in the churches ought to depend on its possession. The theologian endeavours to make it articulate and to trace its history, but to do so is a progressive science, and the churches will not long retain the respect of the educated world if they prefer to take their stand on the theology of an age which has passed away.

It is this attitude to theology which will in the end decide the vexed question of the creeds. The allegorical and symbolical explanations which proved fatal to heathenism (see pp. 129ff.) are being applied far too much to the creeds. In itself this is no more likely to be successful than it was in heathenism, and the ecclesiastical theologian fails to notice that interpretation is not the battle-field on which the question of the creeds is going to be fought out, unless indeed it is to become merely a squabble between the few survivors from the wreck of great institutions. What men feel is that if the Church is a society for the maintenance of a close and defined system of theology it has no message for them, and has as little claim to be taken seriously as a society of chemists which should take for its purpose not the discovery and propagation of chemical truth, but the preservation of the scientific theories of the Middle Ages.

The laity cling to the churches because they believe that they are not intended primarily to perpetuate theological opinion, but to develop and organize religious life, and the time is rapidly approaching when the educated classes will feel and say openly that it is as absurd to tie down theological science—that is, the intellectual expression of religion—to a few formularies as it

would be to impose the same bondage on other sciences. What is required from theology is that it should be so far as is possible true and logical. Argument, not tradition, will say the last word. Part of the heritage from the Early Church is that it has shown the possibility of an intelligent theology which shall grow and develop in accordance with the increase of knowledge, and the deepening of perception. The men of today are essentially religious, but they ask also for an intelligible theology.

The development of such a theology is being carried on at present in all the civilized countries of the world by men who are devoting their lives to this object. In the main they all are working on the same general lines, though there are startling differences in detail, and they are, with few exceptions, profoundly religious men. They have been born and brought up in the various churches of Christendom, and they desire intensely to keep their inheritance. It is in no spirit of arrogant self-assertion, but in the faith that their careers have been guided by a higher power, which has made use of their industry and scientific training to lead the world to some deeper knowledge of the truth, that they grieve over the reluctance of the churches to hear their message. The world is

listening to them: the popular lecture room, the public press, the great universities are theirs, but to many of them it seems that the great historic communities to which they belong are turning a deaf ear to messages which others accept, and are refusing the offices of men who have the desire and the ability to serve them well. "Lo! we turn to the Gentiles" is a simple phrase, but there never yet was an Israelite who uttered it without yearning in his heart for the people of the promise.

The sacramental ministry of the Church remains in the churches of modern Christianity, though it is in some of the Protestant communities changed almost out of recognition. On pp. 137 ff., I have emphasized my conviction that the sacramental side of religious life is permanent, and that a ministry for the care of souls is an essential part of organized Christianity. But Christianity cannot adequately live up to this side of its stewardship if it do not fulfil two requirements.

The first is easier to state than to perform: the education of ministers in Christian churches must be reformed so that candidates for the ministry shall be trained primarily in the facts of spiritual life, in health and in sickness, and only secondarily in the history of the religious life of the past.

Only those who are actively engaged in teaching understand how necessary this is, and how many practical difficulties must be overcome.

Equally important, more controversial, and calling for much mutual forbearance is the second requirement. Christianity has to face and accept the fact that it is no longer a church but a collection of churches. It is impossible to undo what has been done; not only has Catholic Christianity itself divided into more than one branch, but also there is alongside of it a whole series of Protestant churches, in some ways more, in some ways less, efficient than the older societies, with a spiritual life as deep and true as that of Catholics, though otherwise fostered and differently expressed. Much harm has been done in this connection by the use of the word *schism*. Schism is a metaphorical expression derived primarily from tearing a garment. Now undoubtedly the tearing of garments is undesirable under all circumstances; a torn garment is an injured garment, and the piece torn out is a piece of rag and not a garment. But after all Christianity is not a garment—dead and inorganic—but a living organism. The application to living things of metaphors drawn from the inorganic world is sure to be imperfect. Much would therefore be gained if Christians would

remember that in the world of living organisms, schism or scission is the recognized means of perpetuating life. Cells split into two, in the lowest forms of natural life, without effort or pain, but in the higher forms the process of splitting off a new group of cells, and so producing a new living being, is often attended by effort, danger, and pain. Still, we do not therefore look on it as evil. Life, according to the biologist, depends on what he calls scission, and ordinary people call birth. Civilized life, according to the sociologist, depends on the recognition and sustenance of new lives, not in getting rid of them, either by extermination, or by an unthinkable process of reabsorption. Surely it would be better if we were to change the implications of the metaphor, and see that the schism which led to the creation of the various Protestant churches is the birth of new organisms, and that the task of the future is not reunion, but recognition and co-operation. Each of us belongs to his church as he does to his own family; we would not change even if we could, but exclusiveness and pride is as unpleasant and foolish in a church as it is in a family.

It is of course true that this change of attitude will call for the abandonment of many long-cherished illusions, especially from churches with the

Catholic tradition of episcopacy. It is essential that the theory of a divinely established episcopal order should be frankly abandoned, except in the sense that the powers that be are ordained of God. "Orders" are necessary to "order," and order is necessary to life, but neither "orders" nor "order" is the source of life. They come from it, and do not impart it. Ordination ought to be the recognition of "gifts"—charismata—and of power, but it cannot confer them when they are absent. It is the practice in many circles to discuss this question on the basis of historical evidence and biblical or patristic quotations: I do not propose to follow this method because it is not really germane to the question. The point at issue is whether episcopally ordained clergy have spiritual powers other than those possessed by the ministers of Protestant churches or by laity who have never been ordained at all, not what past generations may have thought about the matter. I believe that the modern man has as a rule made up his mind by observation that on the one hand there are many non-episcopal clergy who constantly further the cause of Christianity by word and deed, and really are pastors of the flock and physicians to the sick, while on the other there are some episcopal clergy who, in spite of their ordination,



are obviously lacking in these gifts. Therefore he concludes that ordination cannot confer gifts, and though he values it he does so only as the official sanction, necessary to all order and discipline, to certain gifted persons to exercise a ministry which, since it has been given them from above, ecclesiastical authority can neither give nor take away, but only recognize.

Nevertheless, although the Catholic, whether Greek, Roman or Anglican, has much to concede to the Protestant churches before co-operation can really be effective, the Protestant churches have also something to learn from the Catholic. It is true that the "gifts" of the true minister of the Church—the pastoral instinct, the power of sympathizing with and helping the outcast, and of intelligible preaching or teaching—are not conveyed by ordination, but a church is something more than the sum of its members, and the office of being its appointed agent is in itself a gift which is really conveyed by the Church and carries with it power and authority. The Catholic has overestimated this truth, and has often confused it with the individual gifts of the spirit, but the Protestant has often underestimated or ignored it. At the same time this does not alter the fact that the main issue is the power of ordination to

convey "gifts," and that here the Protestant is right and the Catholic is wrong.

More obscure, more difficult, and yet, if I be not greatly mistaken, even more important than the intellectual problems of theology, or the partly intellectual, partly practical, problems of the ministry, is the question of ethics.

The ethical problem of the Church in the Roman Empire was to raise the standard of individual life, and it succeeded in doing so. No one would maintain that the necessity of raising the standard of individual life is now past, but this ought not to obscure the fact that at present the world is looking rather for something to raise the standard of social and national life.

It is a platitude to say that we are living in a period of rapid social change; but it may be doubted whether it is equally well recognized that this rapid social change is bringing with it the necessity for a widening of ethical theory to cover the new complexities of life.

The facts as they appear to the ordinary observer are that modern commercial methods have produced at one end of the social scale enormous wealth, and a power for good and evil concentrated in the hands of a few men such as no previous

epoch has known. But at the other end of the scale even if distress and poverty have not actually increased, the perception of them has become more acute and has been greatly stimulated by the wider outlook and enlarged powers of imagination conferred by the extension of education, so that general discontent is rapidly increasing. Probably a majority of men would welcome a radical change, but is held back by not unreasonable fear lest its consequences should be worse than existing evils.

The cause of the trouble is partly economic, but partly ethical. The ruthlessness of some commercial methods seems to be quite as opposed to a high ethical standard as any caused by military operations, and it is felt that new ethical standards must be introduced into public life if it is to be saved from disaster. Unfortunately to many, especially in the working-classes, it appears that the organized churches of Christendom are content with preaching submission to the poor and philanthropy to the rich, emphasizing the virtue of spending money properly instead of rather calling attention to the duty of not earning it dubiously. The quarrel of the working-classes with the churches is therefore ethical rather than theological. For that reason more and more of them

are turning towards the teaching of that whole complex<sup>1</sup> of social and ethical propaganda of which socialism is the most prominent.

Whether socialism as an economic system be right or wrong I do not know; but it is plain that the reason why it appeals to so many people is not that they understand economic science, but that they think that they have found in it an organization which vigorously protests against the evils of the present day (whereas the churches only offer palliatives), and holds up before men's eyes an ideal of life, and a vision of society raised to a higher plane. It is asking men to believe in the coming of a New Age which will be enjoyed by a better human nature, and to prepare themselves for it.

The parallelism between the present position of socialism, with its allied methods of thought, and early Christianity is extraordinary and very disquieting. In both cases you have a body of men asserting in a perhaps somewhat irritating manner their aloofness from the established order

<sup>1</sup> I mean the whole group of -isms and anti-s which attract those who are discontented with things as they are. The historian of the future will quite possibly compare them with the "God-fearers" of the Roman Empire, and point out that although they lacked the elements of stability and permanence they were the raw material out of which new systems of greater strength were built up.

of society; in both cases you have a body of men prophesying that society is doomed to come down with a crash and that a New Age is at hand which they and the outcasts of the existing system will inherit; in both cases you find this body of men attacked as irreligious, unpatriotic, and deluded. That is the parallelism. How much further will it go? The future is unknown to us, but we can sometimes use the past as a mirror in which to study its advance.

In the days of the Roman Empire the crash did come and a new age did dawn, but it was not the sort of new age which the Christians had foreseen. It was instead the Dark Ages; and this was partly because there was an element of truth in the accusations brought against the Christians, that they were neglecting things essential to the welfare of organized society, and partly because the intellectual and cultured classes of that day lacked the faith and courage to lead the way to a new world, but kept turning regretful backward glances to the old order which was passing away. The New Age was dark because it lacked the prestige, power, and tradition of government which the richer classes of the Empire had possessed, and its leadership passed to the Christian Church because, although it lacked these things, it had a clearer

vision of a higher life, and the faith to follow its guidance through the darkness.

Moreover, recent events in Europe have shown how important it is to extend the influence of Christian ethics to international life, and to recover the concept—well known to the Church of the Middle Ages—of a community of life on its highest plane binding together men of different blood, and providing the nations with a “common superior” to whom they could yield obedience without degradation, and submit their disputes without dishonour. Christianity was once above nationality; and the present evils are largely due to a perverted nationalism which leads men to act and think as though it were the highest possible form of life, and as though Christian ethics could not apply to it.

When the men of the last century come to stand before the bar of history two classes will be especially prominent. On the one hand there will be the men of science, who have extended the boundaries of knowledge with an unequalled rapidity. They have often rejected the name of Christian because they have been unable to accept the traditional *weltanschauung* of the past; but they have followed closely the ideal of Christian ethics. As a class they have been marked by a passion for

truth, and by willingness to help even at their own expense all animated by the same desire. They have constantly sacrificed themselves to the good of others, and have pursued controversy to establish fact rather than to secure personal triumph. On the other hand there will be the class of those who have guided the international and national politics of Europe. With few exceptions they have kept the name of Christian, but their conduct has been a cynical denial of Christian ethics. Their skill has been to use language which should deceive though it did not break the formal limits of truth. They have obtained power for themselves at the expense of others, and they have abused the opportunities of controversy to obscure the real issues. They have held up opponents to hatred and contempt, as well in national as in international life, and in the end they have subjected to the horrors of war the countries which they professed to guide. Can it be doubted what the verdict of history will be on these two classes? and is it not the tragedy of Christian history that the organized churches have allowed *weltanschauung* to count for more than ethics?

The one thing which seems certain today is that society as we have known it is drawing to an end. Our children will inherit a New Age; will it

be an age of light or of darkness? If it is to be an age of light there will be required from its spiritual rulers the establishment of some common superior of nations to safeguard the development and legitimate expansion of each against the oppression or envy of any, and a new extension of Christian ethics to raise the standard of social and national life. Will the churches give this? Can anyone else? It is the doubt expressed in these questions which brings to the study of history at the present moment so deep a sense of the shadow of evil days to come, and lays on us the responsibility of warning those who at present enjoy the heritage of Christianity how great is the task before them, and how serious is the necessity for faith in the guidance of life, for the love of truth in study, and for courage in utterance to the people.



## APPENDIX

### THE EARLY CHRISTIAN TREATMENT OF SIN AFTER BAPTISM<sup>1</sup>

THE primitive view of Gentile Christianity was that those who were baptized were free from sin. They had been born again into a state of sinlessness,<sup>2</sup> and it was their duty to see that they never relapsed again into the dangerous state which they had left; if they should fail in this duty, it was questionable whether they had any further chance of salvation.

The best-known statement of this doctrine is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, apparently written at a time when the doctrine had become a matter of dispute, and needed clear enunciation. It is especially plain in two passages: (a) in Hebrews vi., 4-8, "For as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the Age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance;" (b) in Hebrews x., 26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain

<sup>1</sup> This discussion, with a few changes, was originally published in the *Expositor*.

<sup>2</sup> Sinlessness is a somewhat ambiguous term; it is here used as the equivalent of *posse non peccare*, not of *non posse peccare*.

fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries."

These passages clearly imply the normal sinlessness of Christians, and exclude the possibility of forgiveness for wilful sin after baptism. Nor is there any reason for rejecting the unanimous tradition of early Christian exegesis which explains "enlightened" (φωτισθέντας) in vi., 4, as a reference to baptism, especially when it is remembered that Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> mentions that φωτισμός was the technical term for baptism.

To the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, then, wilful sin after baptism was regarded as unforgivable.

The same point of view was that of St. Paul, but in his Epistles the question is not yet a matter of controversy, and is only implied or mentioned in passing.

For instance, if we read Romans vi. without the prejudice which comes from our knowledge of history and experience of life, we are forced to admit that St. Paul regarded the condition of the normal Christian as one of sinlessness. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin . . . being made free from sin ye became servants of righteousness," etc., leading up to the final conclusion that (viii., 1) "there is now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus," because they have been freed from sin. That this is St. Paul's position is obscured too often by a wrong interpretation of vii., 24,<sup>2</sup> which really describes the

<sup>1</sup> Justin, 1 *Apol.*, lxi.

<sup>2</sup> This verse and those immediately preceding seem to me to be a piece of the spiritual autobiography of St. Paul, and refer to the time before his conversion. The main difficulty is that the writer

condition of an unregenerate but distressed soul, fighting against sin, until at last it cries out in a rhetorical question, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"—to which St. Paul answers, "Thanks be to God! through Jesus Christ." This exegesis makes sense, is that of the earliest commentators, and agrees with early Christian thought; whereas the view which explains it as referring to regenerate experience, introduces confusion into the whole argument, though agreeable to later theological systems.

Moreover, just as in the Epistle to the Hebrews the attainment of this sinless condition is connected with baptism, so also in Romans the introduction to the description of the breach between Christians and sin is: "We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." (Rom. vi., 3.)

Similarly, if we turn to 1 John, we find sinlessness regarded as the normal characteristic of Christians, though the writer is largely occupied with the fact that there are in practice many exceptions to this normal type. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (iii., 6); and "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin" (iii., 8, v., 18) represent the Johannine view of what Christian life might be and ought to be.

The historical reason why the Christians thus regarded themselves as sinless was that sinlessness in the literature of the Jews, and especially in the Apocalyptic writings, was a necessary characteristic of the Messianic kingdom, and the Christians were (no

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makes a large use of the historic present, and that in v. 25 the words *χαρίς . . . κυρίου ἡμῶν* are a parenthesis, anticipating the fact of redemption, while the rest of the verse refers still to unregenerate experience.

doubt to some extent in a proleptic sense) members of that kingdom. For instance, in the Testament of Levi (c. 18) we are told of the Messiah, "In his priesthood shall sin come to an end, and the lawless shall cease to do evil . . . and he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life, and the spirit of holiness shall be on them." Or again in Jubilees, v., 12, "And he made for all his works a new and righteous nature, so that they should not sin in their whole nature for ever, but should all be righteous each in his kind alway."<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to doubt that sinlessness was expected to be a characteristic of the Messianic kingdom "in the last days." "Sinlessness" is the negative method of stating this characteristic, just as "righteousness" is the positive method, and it may be suggested that an attempt to appreciate this fact is far more likely to be fruitful in explaining the meaning of δικαιοσύνη in the Pauline Epistles than somewhat academic and barren discussions as to the "forensic" or other character of the word. For it is at least certain that to St. Paul it was already the "last days," and that he regarded Christians as the "saints" who were to be members of the Messianic kingdom. Thus, however strange it may be to us, in the light of eighteen hundred years of Christian experience, which has shown that Christians are no more sinless than other people, in the first generation, for those who believed that the Messiah was coming within the limits of their own life, and that they were the mem-

<sup>1</sup> These passages, with others of the same type, from IV. Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Apocalypse of Moses, etc., are quoted by H. Windisch, *Taufe und Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origenes*.

bers of his kingdom, it was perfectly natural to think that they were sinless and could and ought to remain so.

The psychological basis of the doctrine, which explains why the Greek world could so easily assimilate this view, is rather more complicated. It turns chiefly on the fact that until quite recently, at least in popular thought, the word "sin" covered more than one idea. The best way of making plain the importance of this point for the present subject is by a reference to Professor W. James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. It will be remembered that he divides men roughly into two classes.

In the first place there are those who are throughout their lives fairly well contented with the world and with themselves. They know that neither they nor the world are perfect, and that there is an unpleasant background of evil to life in which pain, sorrow, and sin are the prominent features. Yet on the whole they are conscious that they are doing their best, and however much they may state on official occasions that they are miserable sinners, they feel in their hearts that in them there is much health (instead of none, as their lips state); and even when things go most obviously wrong they are constitutionally unable to face the fact, and prefer to believe that somehow "All's right with the world." These are the "once-born"—probably much the greatest number of people belong to their ranks. To such persons sin is—so far as their experience goes, apart from doctrines which they take on trust from others—either the act of consciously doing wrong, or the general imperfection of human nature. The two things are, of course, quite distinct, but are commonly confused. The result of

this confusion is that a not too intellectual member of this class can usually be found ready to state (1) that he is a miserable sinner—by which he means that he often makes mistakes and is generally imperfect; (2) that he has rarely if ever consciously seen right and deliberately done wrong. Such statements are only intelligible when one remembers that the history of doctrine is the triumph of words over thought, and that the word “sin” is used in a double signification—sometimes it means human imperfection and fallibility, sometimes it means a deliberate choice of evil rather than good.

Over against this class—the “once-born”—stands quite another type. These are they who have come to appreciate the background of sorrow in life more clearly than the foreground of happiness. The imperfection of themselves and of the world is a reality which they feel in their hearts, rather than merely acquiesce in with their intellects. Those who have not passed through such an experience can only judge of it from the statements of those who have done so, and have described their feelings in books, such as, for instance, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Sometimes this outlook on life passes away gradually; sometimes it remains throughout life, resulting in permanent unhappiness; sometimes it degenerates into insanity; but sometimes the sufferer (for so he can only be described) wins through to a higher plane of thought, in which—usually in some form of religion—he finds a higher unifying principle. Such men are the “twice-born” of Professor James's book, and probably they have a truer and saner outlook on life than the “healthy-minded once-born.”

Three further points are important for the present

purpose. 1. The change from unhappiness to contentment often comes to the "twice-born" with great suddenness, and in connection with some striking incident or some outward phenomenon. 2. Whereas the "twice-born" are probably a small minority of mankind at any time, the converts to a new religion, or to a new religious movement, belong almost exclusively to that class. The "once-born" are contented, they are those who "need no repentance"; but those who are suffering seek and find help in religious movements and in spiritual "revivals." 3. There is a universal tendency on the part of the "twice-born" to speak of their consciousness of imperfection and of the dark side of life as a "consciousness of sin," and of their release from their sufferings as "forgiveness," or "getting rid of sin," or some similar expression. Whether this is the best formula or not is not important for the present purpose, but it is at least certain that the "twice-born" mean by it something which is outside the experience of the "once-born," and the result is that when, as is always the case with a religious movement which survives and becomes an organized church, the majority of the members are no longer "twice-born," but "once-born," "consciousness of sin" and "forgiveness of sin" become merely theological formulae instead of a living experience, or in the alternative there is a disastrous attempt to force the experience of "once-born" persons into the mould of the other type.

In the first century there was, as there is now, an unusual number of people who were not, in Professor James's phrase, "healthy-minded," and the result was, then as now, a period of great religious movement. Of this religious movement Christianity was

a part, and the first Christians were probably all "twice-born." It was therefore perfectly natural that they should look on themselves as set free from sin, as having become sinless, and should express this personal experience in language borrowed from Jewish Messianic thought. Moreover they had found peace in their acceptance of Christianity, which began with baptism; it is therefore intelligible that they had a real experiential reason for connecting the attainment of freedom from sin with baptism,<sup>1</sup> and for accepting the dogmatic system which ascribed sinlessness to the followers of the Messiah and regarded baptism as the means of initiation into his kingdom.

Nevertheless experience of life soon showed that the Christian after all was frequently not sinless—in whatever sense the word sin be taken. Thus the problem arose, what was to be done in the case of a Christian who relapsed into sin?

The most obvious suggestion was to repeat the baptism which had originally been the cause of sinlessness. The polemic directed against this suggestion in the passage quoted above from the Epistle to the Hebrews is a sufficient proof that there was a party which made this suggestion, and that it did not find favour in the eyes of those who ultimately gained the day; but the most important example which we have is the famous heretic Marcion. According to Epi-

<sup>1</sup> It is unnecessary here to enlarge on the fact that this train of thought was facilitated by the general belief in the first century that spiritual—and indeed material—results could be obtained by the use of "names" in invocations, and by the widespread opinion that water was a life-giving substance in more than the physical sense, or at least that it could become so under correct circumstances.



phanus<sup>1</sup> the Marcionites admitted repeated baptism in the case of sin, and he unkindly adds that Marcion himself had been obliged to make use of this privilege. It appears that this arrangement was defended by a reference to Luke xii., 50, "I have a baptism to be baptized with," which was taken to imply a second baptism, as Christ, when he spoke these words, had already been baptized by John the Baptist. It would, however, seem from the same passage in Epiphanius that this repetition of baptism was limited to three times.

Probably this suggestion of rebaptism was the earliest, as it is the simplest, method of dealing with the question; but it was met with a resolute opposition on the part of the Church, and, except for the references to Marcion, the only traces which remain of it are the polemical passages in Hebrews, and the emphasis laid on the *one* baptism in Ephesians iv., 5, and perpetuated—though with a probably different meaning—in the Nicene Creed.

It is worth asking why this natural suggestion of repeated baptism was so generally rejected. Probably because it did not really correspond to psychological fact in the way in which the original baptism did. As was shown above, the fact which gave baptism its importance was that it so often coincided with the turning-point in the experience of the "twice-born." The first Christians had therefore a very specious argument from experience at their disposal when they regarded it as the cause of the change in

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, I. xlii. Βαπτισθεὶς ὁ κύριος ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἰωάννου ἔλεγε τοῖς μαθηταῖς Βάπτισμα ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, οὕτω τὸ διδόναι πλείω βαπτίσματα ἐδογμάτισεν.

their lives, and inasmuch as this change was held to be the passing from a state of sin to a state of righteousness, it was easy to identify baptism and the forgiveness of sins.

But though one may use the same word—sin—to describe both evil deeds and the state of unhappiness of the “twice-born” before they find peace, it is quite certain that this is a confusion of thought, and it is similarly certain that the sin forgiven, or got rid of, by the first baptism was as a rule sin in the latter sense, while the sin which gave rise to the problem of sin after baptism was sin in the former sense.

There was therefore a real psychological and experiential difference between the two cases. It was a confusion of thought which led men to argue that what baptism had done once it can do again; and although the Catholic was quite as confused intellectually on this point as was the heretic, his instinct—based on experience, not on logic—was more correct, and made him distinguish the “forgiveness of sins” obtained in baptism as something which could not be given twice—at least not by the same means.

Still, the rejection of rebaptism was no solution of the practical problem. Perhaps the earliest of the other attempts of which we have clear evidence is presented by the famous verse in 1 John v., 16 f., “If any man see his brother sinning sin<sup>1</sup> not unto death, he shall ask, and he (*i.e.*, the Son of God) will give him life for them that sin not unto death: there is sin unto death, not concerning this do I say that he should

<sup>1</sup> The R.V. puts this translation of *ἀμαρτία* into the margin, and a *sin* into the text; but it is difficult, to see any valid reason for doing so.

make request. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death."

The doctrine implied here is that there is a qualitative distinction between different kinds of sin. Some are deadly—the teaching which the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to hold as applying to all sin—and others are not. These last can obtain forgiveness through prayer, and through the intercession of Christ. "My little children, I write these things to you that ye sin not"—sinlessness is thus the ideal and normal position which the writer hopes for—"and if any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Here we get two important developments of doctrine: first, the distinction between mortal and venial sin, and secondly, the attribution to Christ not only of the function, which was originally that of the Messiah, of cleansing from sin and admitting those who had thus been made pure into his kingdom of sinless saints, but of the perpetual cleansing and interceding for the members of his Church. The changed point of view with regard to the nature of Christians necessitated a corresponding change with regard to the functions of the Christ.

Over against this qualitative distinction between deadly and venial as a basis for the solution of the practical problem of sin after baptism, we find an independent attempt in what may be called a quantitative manner. It will be remembered that Marcion, though admitting the principle of rebaptism, imposed a limit on the number of times that this might take place. As compared with the method suggested in 1 John, this may fairly be called a quantitative limit to forgivable sin, and from the "Shepherd" of Hermas

we find that in the Church at Rome, although Marcion's doctrine of rebaptism was rejected, the quantitative system was introduced, probably even before the coming of Marcion, in order to deal with the practical difficulty of sin among baptized Christians.

Hermas discusses the matter in the third chapter of the fourth *Mandate*. "I will venture," he says, "to ask one thing more. . . . I have heard from certain teachers that there is no further repentance beyond that, when we went down into the water, and received remission (*ἄφεσιν*) of our former sins." It is clear that, even if this be not a direct allusion to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, as 1 Clement shows, was early known in Rome, it is at least a reference to the same stern attitude towards sin after baptism which that Epistle represents. To this the angel replied, "Yes, that is so; for he who has received remission of sins must not sin again, but live in purity (*ἀγνείῃ*)<sup>1</sup>; but since you inquire into everything, I will explain this point also to you, though without giving occasion to future Christians or those who are faithful. For these two classes are offered no repentance for sin, but have remission of their former sins. So then for those called before these days the Lord has appointed a repentance . . . and to me has been given the control of this repentance. But I say to you, said he, after that great and solemn call, if a man be tempted by the devil, and sin, he has one repentance; but if he

<sup>1</sup> This word indicates clearly the type of sin which loomed largest to the early Christian mind. It also raises the question whether marriage after baptism was contemplated as allowable. Marcion, of course, forbade it; but this was not mere heresy, for it seems probable that Tertullian, even in his pre-Montanist days, did the same, and so probably, much later, did Aphraates.

sin lightly and repent, it is unprofitable for that man, for scarcely shall he live."

No one would maintain that this passage is in all respects easy to understand—Hermas is not a writer who attains clearness by attention to detail—but the general meaning is tolerably plain. For the future a modification is introduced into the original plan of salvation, according to which sin after baptism was deadly, and a chance—but only a single chance—of efficient repentance is offered to those who have thus sinned. This does not give a direct remission of sins as baptism does, but offers the chance of an ultimate remission, if the sinner does not again fall, but remains constantly obedient to the angel of repentance.

It is plain that this conception of repentance is the first step towards the Catholic doctrine of sacramental penance, for though drawing a distinction between it and baptism, it nevertheless places it in the same class. We may also guess that there was some special reason for the change, and this is likely to have been some persecution or other crisis which had led to an extraordinary amount of backsliding; but the chronology of Hermas does not allow us to identify this with any certainty; all that can be said is that not long before A.D. 140 is the most generally probable date.

It should also be noted that Hermas is careful not to throw any doubt on the original truth of the stern doctrine previously held; he fully accepts it, but claims to have had a new revelation of an offer made by God in modification of it.

This elevation of repentance to a rank similar to that of baptism was not the only way of dealing with

the problem known to Hermas. He warns his readers against the suggestion of postponing baptism in order to escape the responsibility for a pure life (cf. *Vis.* 3, 7, 3). Such a suggestion was of course very natural to those who (like the ordinary "once-born" person) are quite well contented with the world as it is, but wish, in order to be safe, to do what is necessary to secure equal comfort in the world to come. Such persons do not in the least cry out to be "released from this body of death"; they wish to remain in it as long as possible; but they believe, on authority, that at death they will pass into a different sphere of life, and they desire to make certain that they are doing what is necessary for their future well-being. If they are told, as they were in the second century, that initiation into the mysteries, whether Christian or Pagan, will secure what they wish, they will be initiated. But let there be no undue haste: the Christian mysteries, at all events, entail an unpleasant asceticism, and had better be postponed as long as possible. Such reasoning, *mutatis mutandis*, is natural to the "once-born" who has been forced into a system produced originally by the "twice-born." It tends at present in Protestant circles to a so-called "death-bed repentance," and to a philanthropy deferred for old age, or distributed later, though more lavishly, by testamentary dispositions. In the early Church it led to deferred baptism. Such a practice was never encouraged in the great Church, though Tertullian in his treatise on baptism (probably written before his Montanist days) was inclined to think the danger of premature baptism greater than that of a postponement. Among heretics the custom was usual enough, and some of them—for instance, the Marcosians

mentioned by Irenaeus<sup>1</sup>—even practised a baptism of—not for—the dead.

From the conception of repentance found in *Hermas* to the idea of other sacraments to neutralize sin after baptism was only a step. Exactly when and by whom it was first taken is more difficult to say. Probably there is much to be said for the view which sees a connection between this movement and the difference between the original Marcan text of the institution of the Eucharist, and the Matthaean redaction. In *Mark* we read (xiv., 24), "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," to which *Matthew* (xxvi., 28) adds, "for the remission of sins," while he also changes the preceding "and they all drank of it" into the command "drink ye all of it." It is as nearly certain as anything can be that the earliest view of the Eucharist did not regard it as a means of obtaining forgiveness of sins; while a little later this was equally certainly a prevalent view. May we not see some plausibility in the suggestion that the problem of sin after baptism tended to give a changed importance to the Eucharist, and that the Matthaean text—as contrasted with *Mark*—shows the change?

A similar suggestion may be made, though quite diffidently, about *John* xiii., 1-20, which describes the washing of the disciples' feet at the Last Supper. It is, of course, well known that the Fourth Gospel does not describe the institution of the Eucharist, just as it does not describe the institution of baptism, yet few will dispute that it is from beginning to end thoroughly sacramental, and that there are implied references to the Christian mysteries on almost every page. Here

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, I., xiv., 4.

in chapter xiii. the reference to the Eucharist is quite clear, though only implicit, and I believe that the real meaning may be that it is to be regarded as the means of cleansing Christians from the stains of post-baptismal sin. Baptism was washing (λούεσθαι, cf. the λούτρον τῆς παλιγγενεσίας of Titus iii., 5), and that could not be repeated; therefore Peter's request—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head"—was refused. The disciples had been "washed," they were clean, and of this washing there was no need or possibility of repetition. But even he who has been washed may have need to remove the dust, and thus must "wash his feet." When we find this teaching so clearly glancing at baptism on the one hand, and on the other given on the occasion which was known to be connected with the Eucharist, I think that there is much to be said for the suggestion that it was intended to point to the Eucharist as a remedy for the stain of sin after baptism.

However this may be, and of course the interpretation suggested can never, at the best, be regarded as more than possible, we can certainly see in heretical bodies the traces of other sacramental institutions intended to remove sin after baptism. The history of these is outside the scope of this note: it must suffice to draw attention to two interesting examples.

The Marcosians, in the second century, were in the habit of using a second sacrament, closely resembling baptism, to which they gave the name of "Redemption" (ἀπολύτρωσις), and explained all passages in the New Testament containing the word as references to this sacrament (see *Iren. I.*, xiv.).

Still more striking is the teaching of the Pistis Sophia a century or less later, which describes a whole



series of sacraments or mysteries, and in chapters civ.-cvi. gives a number of rules governing the admission of backsliders to renewed participation in the mysteries, based on the interpretation of Matthew xviii., 21 f. (which enjoins forgiveness "unto seventy times seven") as a reference to sin after initiation into the mysteries.

Thus in the first attempts of the early Church to deal with the problem of sin after baptism we can see the beginnings of the later elaborate ecclesiastical edifice of doctrine and practice. The Shepherd of Hermas shows us the origin of the doctrine of "penance." The Johannine Epistles show the beginning of the distinction between venial and deadly sin, which is such an important feature of the later casuistry, and of the propitiatory function of the risen Christ, which is essential to the doctrine of the Mass. Finally the Matthaean version of the institution of the Eucharist, and the Johannine account of the washing of the disciples' feet show traces of the general development of the doctrine of sacramental cleansing for post-baptismal sin, of which Penance and the Mass are the surviving results.



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